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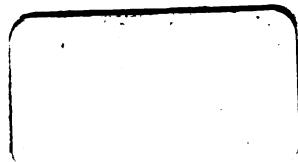
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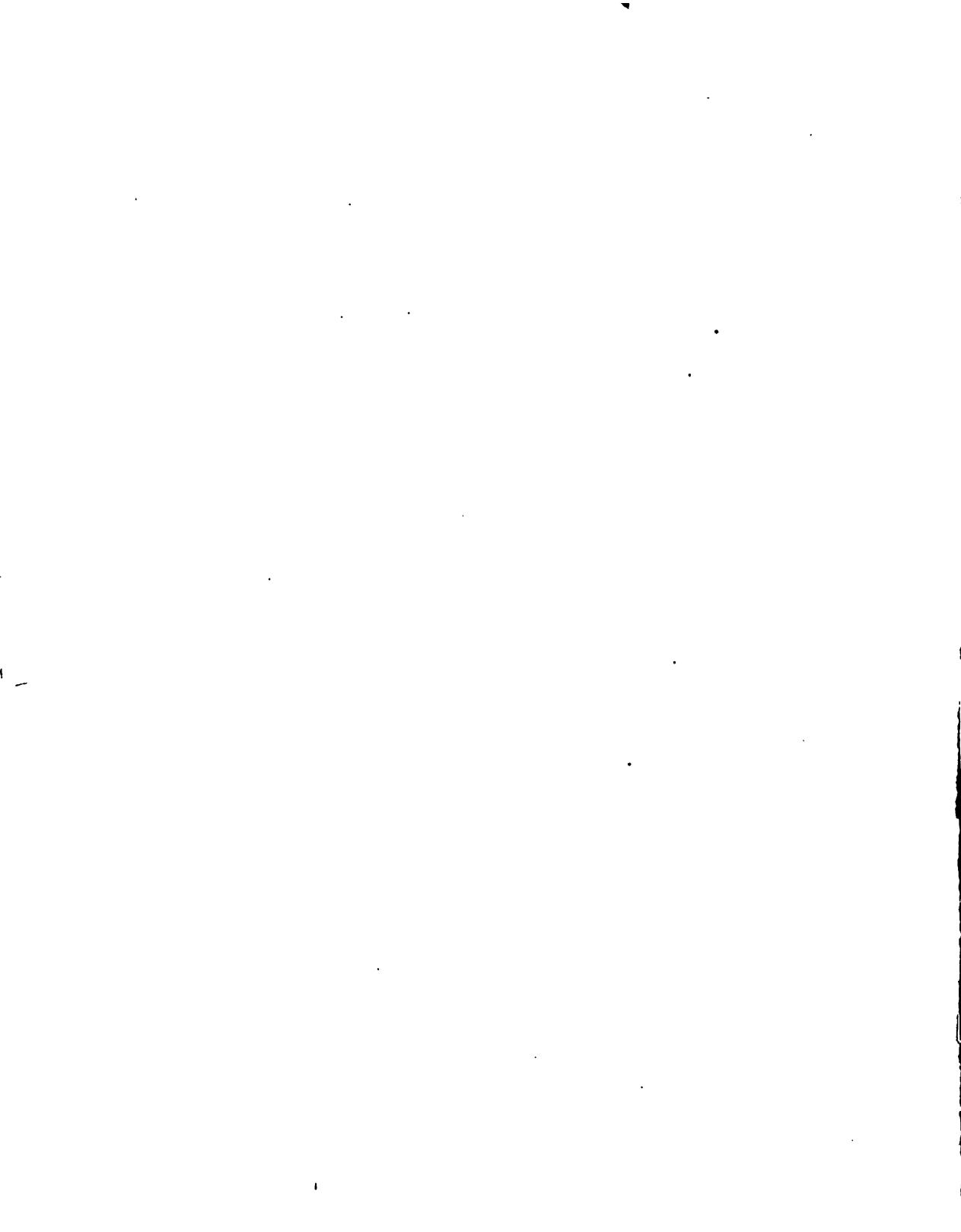
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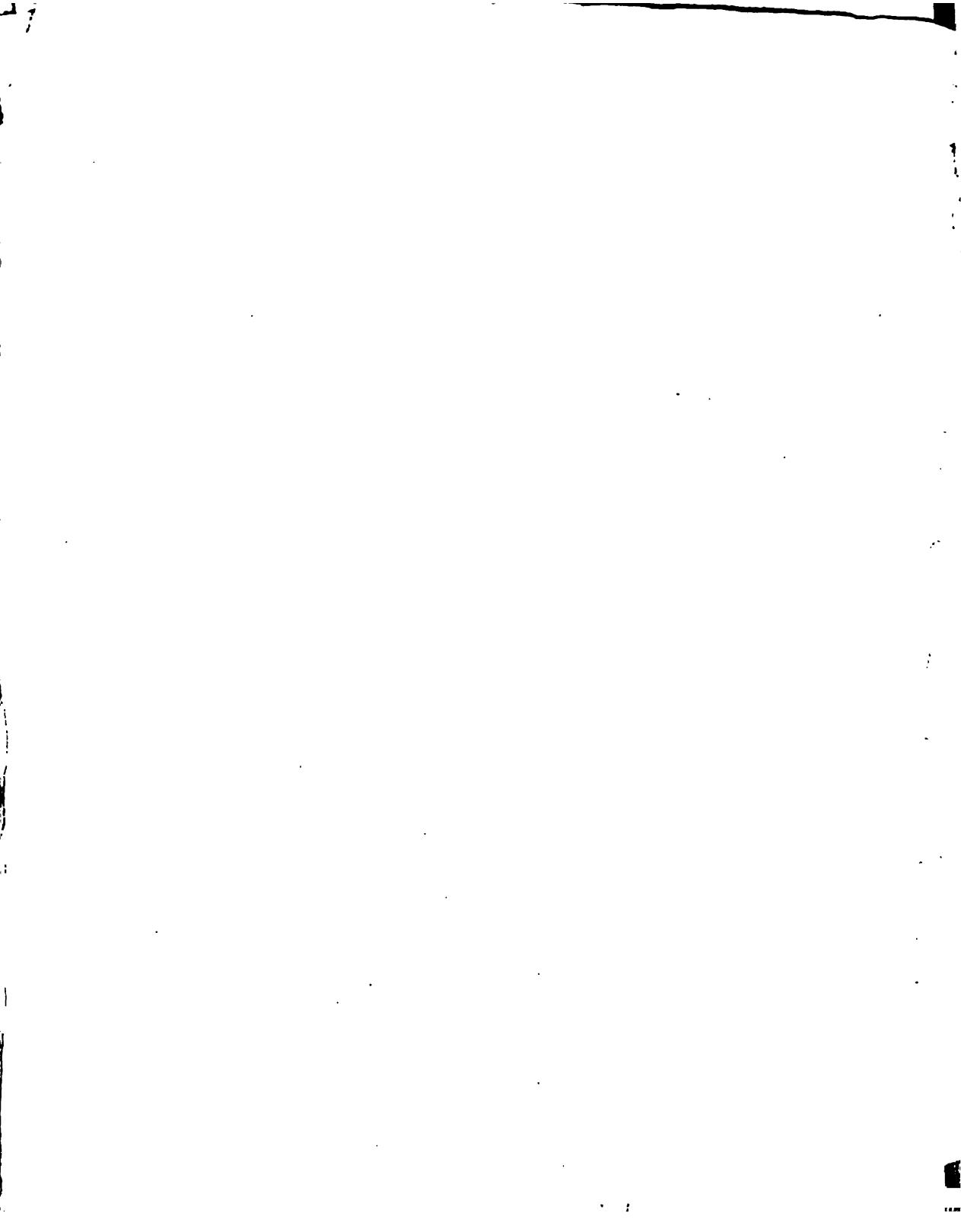


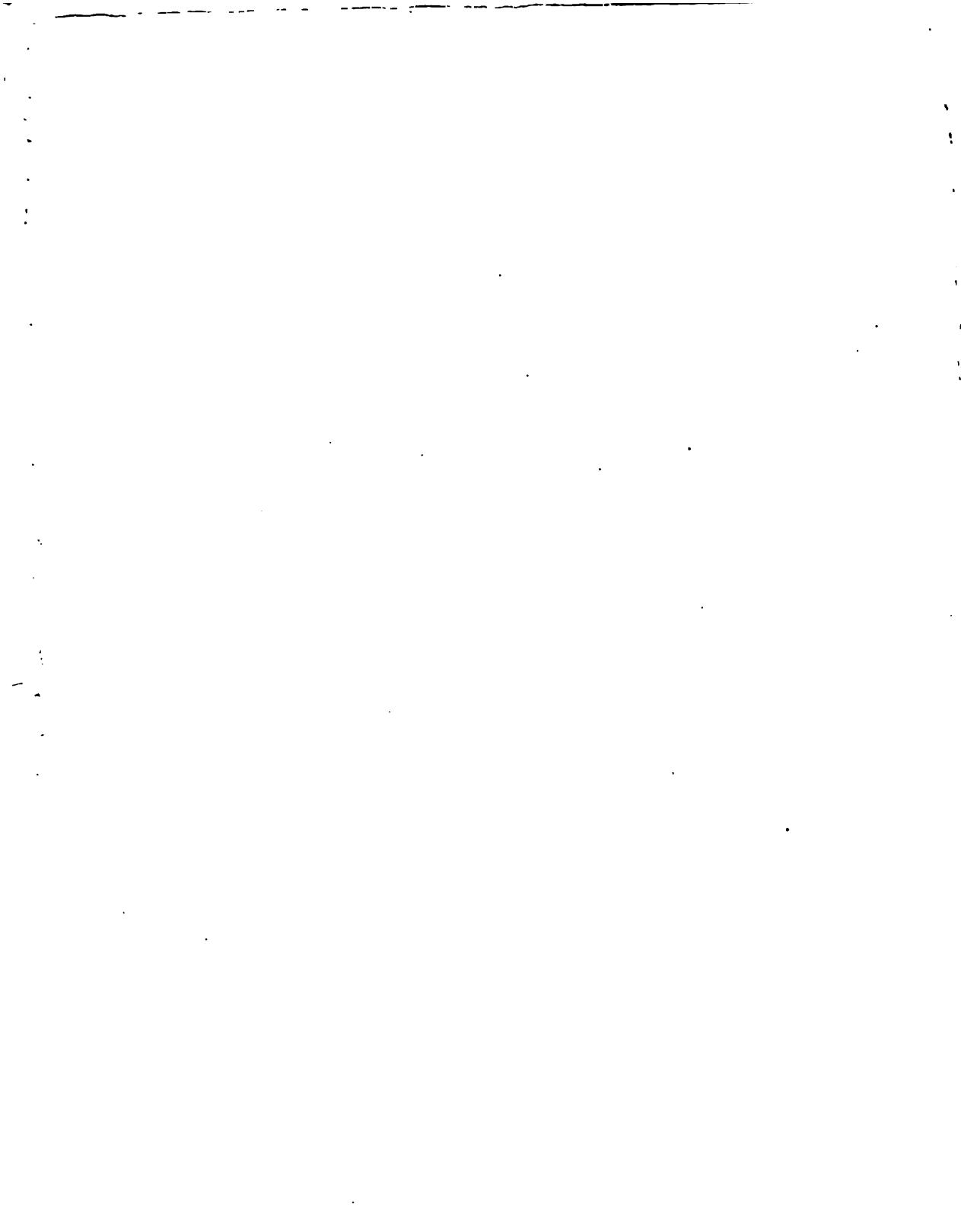
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PRINTED FOR THE MALONE SOCIETY BY  
HORACE HART M.A., AT THE  
OXFORD UNIVERSITY  
PRESS

a

THE HISTORY OF  
KING LEIR  
1605



THE MALONE SOCIETY  
REPRINTS  
1907

This reprint of *King Leir* has been prepared by  
the General Editor and checked by R. Warwick  
Bond.

*Feb. 1908.*

W. W. Greg.

# THE True Chronicle Hi.

Story of King LEIR, and his three  
daughters, *Gonorill, Ragan,*  
*and Cordella.*

As it hath bene diuers and sundry  
times lately acted.

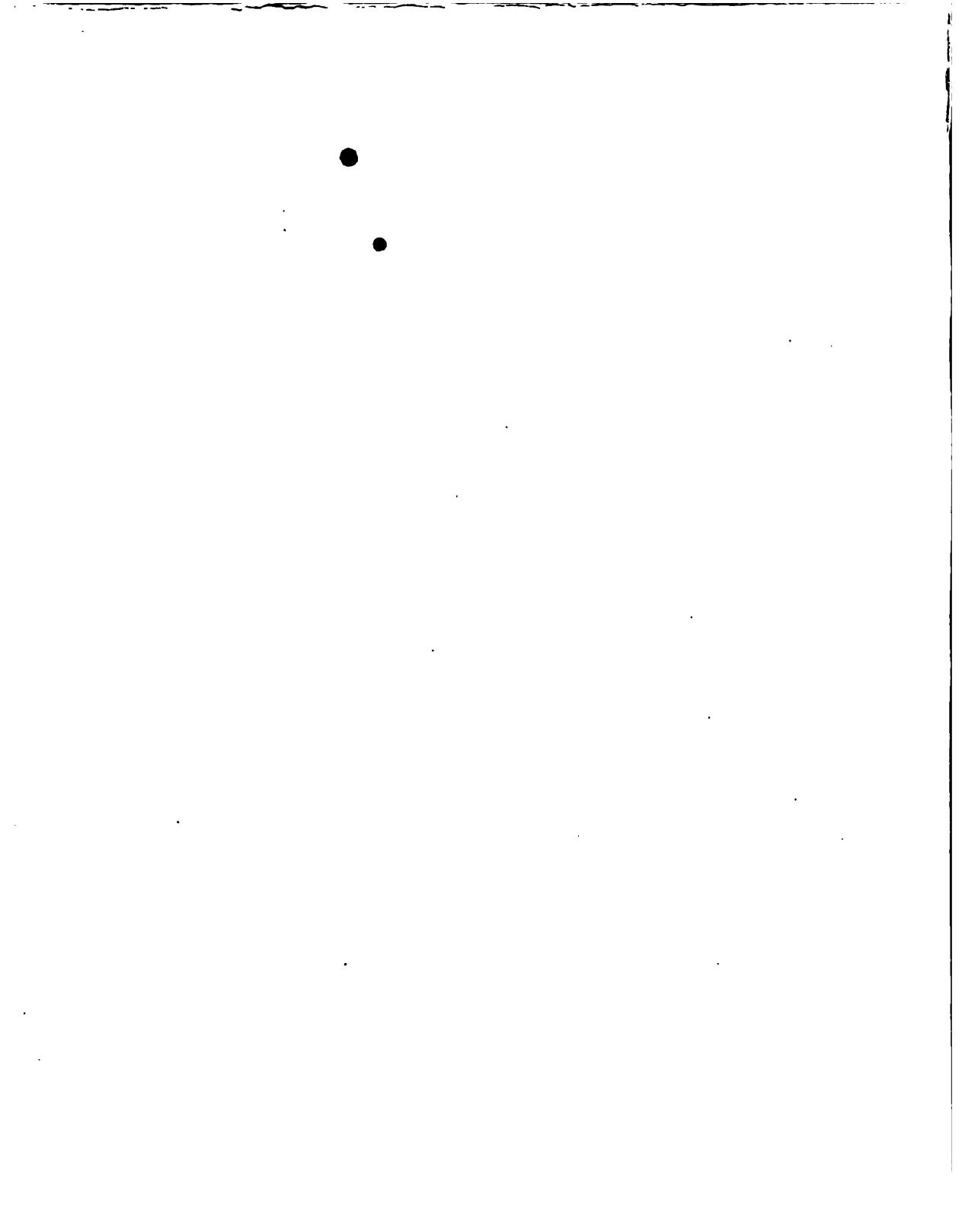


LONDON,

Printed by Simon Stafford for Iohn  
Wright, and are to bee sold at his shop at  
Christes Church dore, next Newgate-  
Market. 1605.

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UNIVERSITY  
OF  
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TITLE-PAGE (A 1) OF THE QUARTO OF 1605 (C. 34. l. 11)



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1605

1907

# The true Chronicle Historie of King Leir and his thre daughters.

## ACT VS I.

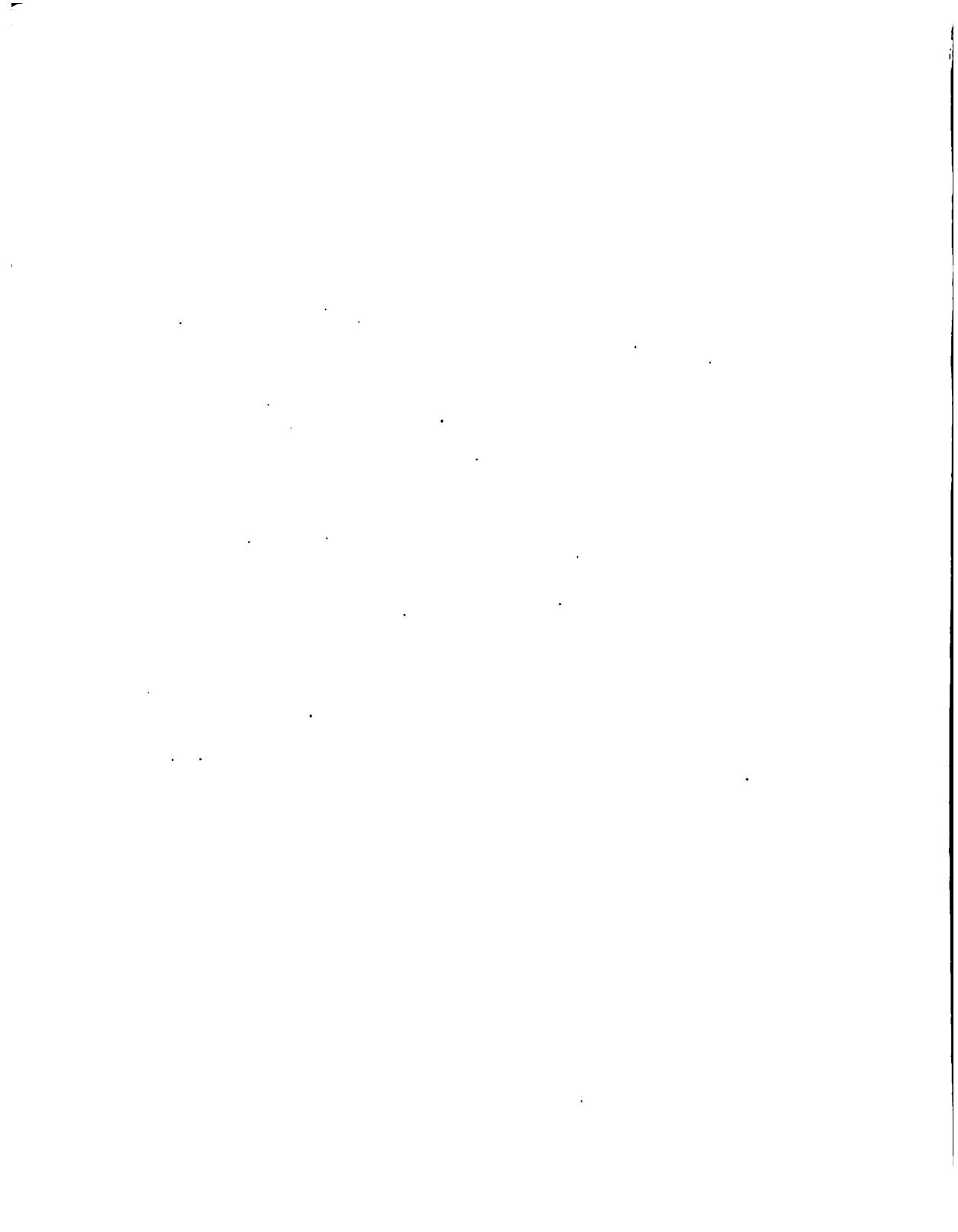
Enter King Leir and Nobles.



Hus to our griefe the obsequies performd  
Of our (too late) deceast and dearest Queen,  
Whose soule I hope, possest of heauely ioyes,  
Doth ride in triumph 'mōgst the Cherubins;  
Let vs request your graue aduice, my Lords,  
For the disposing of our princely daughters,  
For whom our care is specially imployd,  
As nature bindeth to aduance their states,  
In royll marriage with some princely mates:  
For wanting now their mothers good aduice,  
Under whose gouernement they haue receyued  
A perfitt patterne of a vertuous life:  
Left as it were a ship without a sterne,  
Or silly sheepe without a Pastors care;  
Although our selues doe dearely tender them,  
Yet are we ignorant of their affayres:  
For fathers best do know to gouerne sonnes;  
But daughters steps the mothers counsell turnes.  
A sonne we want for to succeed our Crowne,  
And course of time hath cancellid the date  
Of further issue from our withered loynes:  
One foote already hangeth in the graue,  
And age hath made deepe furrowes in my face:  
The world of me, I of the world am weary,  
And I would fayne resigne these earthly cares,  
And thanke vpon the welfare of my soule:  
Whiche by no better meanes may be effected,  
Then by resigning vp the Crowne from me,  
In equall dowry to my daughters three.  
Shalliger. A worthy care, my Liege, which well declares,  
The zeale you bare vnto our goodam Queene:  
And since your Grace hath licens'd me to speake,

A 2

1 cent.



The following entries relating to *King Leir* are found in the Registers of the Stationers' Company for the years 1594 and 1605 respectively :

xiiij<sup>to</sup> die Maij [1594] . . . . .

Entred alsoe for his Copie vnder thandes of bothe the wardens Adam Islip. / .  
a booke entituled / The moste famous Chronicle historye of Edward White. / .  
Leire kinge of England and his Three Daughters . . . vj<sup>d</sup> C. / .

[Arber's Transcript, II. 649.]

8 maij [1605] . . . . .

Entred for his Copie vnder thandes of the Wardens A booke Simon Stafford  
called the Tragecall historie of kinge Leir and his Three  
Daughters &c. As it was latelie Acted . . . . . vj<sup>d</sup>

Entred for his Copie by assignement from Simon Stafford and John Wright /  
by consent of Master Leake, The Tragical history of kinge  
Leire and his Three Daughters / Provided that Simon Stafford  
shall haue the printinge of this booke//. . . . . vj<sup>d</sup>

[Arber's Transcript, III. 289.]

The earlier entry follows immediately upon that, under the same date and to the same stationer, of Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*. The allusion in the second entry to the play having been 'latelie Acted' was probably intended to lead the public to suppose that it was none other than Shakespeare's *King Lear*, the recent popularity of which upon the stage no doubt suggested the publication or republication of the earlier work.

The only record of the performance of *King Leir* that survives is in Henslowe's Diary, where it is recorded as being twice acted at the Rose, when that theatre was occupied by Queen Elizabeth's and the Earl of Sussex' men. The play, which is not marked as new, probably belonged to the former company, since we find no trace of it when,

at an earlier date, Sussex' men were acting alone. In this connection it may be observed that, according to the title-page of the 1594 quarto, *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* was also 'plaid by her Maiesties seruants'. Henslowe's entries are as follow (fol. 9. ll. 8 & 10):

¶ at kinge leare the 6 of apell 1593[4] . . . . . xxxvij<sup>o</sup>  
¶ at kinge leare the 8 [? 9] of apell 1594. . . . . xxvj<sup>o</sup>

The only edition of the play at present known bears the date 1605, and was printed, in accordance with the provision of the Register, by Simon Stafford for John Wright. It is a quarto, and the type used is a roman fount of the usual character and a body closely approximating to modern Pica (20 ll. = 84 mm.). Two copies are preserved in the British Museum, bearing respectively the press-marks C. 34. l. 11 and 161. a. 51. The former of these is defective, wanting the two inner leaves of sheet C, while the latter though perfect is slightly cropt. No variations of reading have been observed between these copies, both of which have been used in the preparation of this reprint.

The authorship of *King Leir* is doubtful, no external evidence on the point being available.

## LIST OF IRREGULAR AND DOUBTFUL READINGS.

45 set	1490 their
149 do	1492 hands
186 c. w. <i>Gow</i> , I (?)	1524 & (I)
212 exceeed	1562 <i>Damion</i>
290 Their	1581 see
441 of (or)	1776 Se
454 Zlood	1807 there,
481 Intruth	1894 leſſe (loſſe)
504 <i>others</i> , (?)	1962 do ubtful
687 Hath light	1970 wrong,
722 face:	2012 <i>changeth</i>
729 exc (?)	2013 <i>Mar</i> , (?)
827 kuow	2032 Theile
902 vn done	2148 insueth
925 <i>solus</i>	2149 trueth
1020 forfey: (?)	2186 folke
1028 Palerno	2187 <i>brangerly</i>
1061 <i>solus</i>	2397 fighteth
1108 cuts	fides
1131 disaster	2411 eye
1175 She	2458 much to
1297 seekes	2554 fute (sure)
1325 one: (?)	2610 toung
1376 salutes	

## LIST OF CHARACTERS

in order of entrance.

LEIR, King of Britain.	The King of CORNWALL.
SKALLIGER { courtiers	his Man.
a Noble of Lear.	
PERILLUS {	The King of CAMBRIA.
GONORILL { daughters	his Man.
RAGAN of Lear.	
CORDELLA {	a Messenger from Cornwall.
The King of GALLIA.	an Ambassador of Gallia.
MUMFORD { courtiers	two Mariners.
Nobles of Gallia.	two Watchmen.
	two Captains.
	a Noble, Chief of a Town.

## **Nobles, Attendants, Soldiers, Townsfolk.**

# THE True Chronicle Hi-

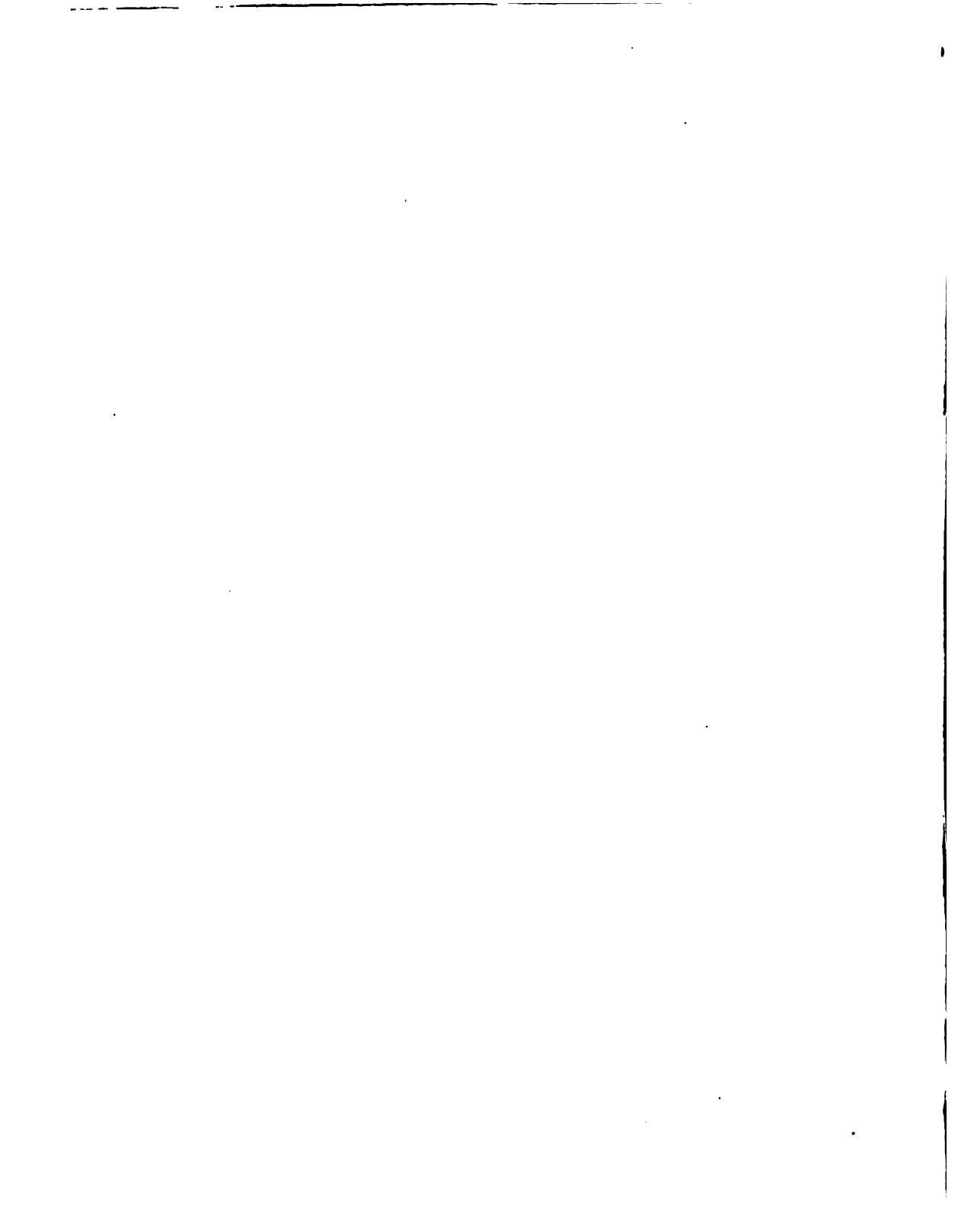
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# The true Chronicle Historie of King Leir and his three daughters.

## ACTVS I.

Enter King Leir and Nobles.

Sc. i

T

Hus to our grieve the obsequies performd  
Of our (too late) deceast and dearest Queen,  
Whose soule I hope, possest of heauely ioyes,  
Doth ride in triumph 'mōgſt the Cherubins;  
Let vs request your graue aduice, my Lords,  
For the diſpoſing of our princely daughters,

For whom our care is ſpecially employd,  
As nature bindeth to aduaunce their ſtates,

10

\* In royll marriage with ſome princely mates:  
For wanting now their mothers good aduice,  
Vnder whose gouernment they haue receyued  
A perfit patterne of a vertuous life:  
Left as it were a ſhip without a ſterne,  
Or ſilly ſheepe without a Paſtors care;  
Although our ſelues doe dearely tender them,  
Yet are we ignorant of their affayres:  
For fathers beſt do know to gouerne ſonnes;  
But daughters ſteps the mothers counſell turnes.

20

A ſonne we want for to ſucceed our Crowne,  
And course of time hath cancelled the date  
Of further iſſue from our withered loynes:  
One foote already hangeth in the graue,  
And age hath made deepe furrowes in my face:

\* The world of me, I of the world am weary,  
And I would fayne refigne these earthly cares,  
And thinke vpon the welfare of my ſoule:  
Which by no better meaneſ may be effected,  
Then by refiſning vp the Crowne from me,  
In equall dowry to my daughters three.

30

Skalliger. A worthy care, my Liege, which well declares,  
The zeale you bare vnto our *quondam* Queene:  
And ſince your Grace hath licens'd me to ſpeake,

## *The History of King Leir*

I censure thus; Your Maiesty knowing well,  
What feuerall Suters your princely daughters haue,  
To make them eche a Ioynter more or lesse,  
As is their worth, to them that loue professe.

*Leir.* No more, nor lesse, but euen all alike,

40 My zeale is fixt, all fashond in one mould :

Wherefore vnpartiall shall my censure be,  
Both old and young shall haue alike for me.

*Nobl.* My gracious Lord, I hartily do wish,  
That God had lent you an heyre indubitate,  
Which might haue set vpon your roiall throne,  
When fates should loose the prisone of your life,  
By whose succession all this doubt might cease ;  
And as by you, by him we might haue peace.

But after-wishes euer come too late,

50 And nothing can reuoke the course of fate :

Wherefore, my Liege, my censure deemes it best,

>To match them with some of your neighbour Kings,

55 ~~x~~ Bordring within the bounds of Albion,

By whose vniited friendship, this our state

May be protected 'gainst all forrayne hate.

*Leir.* Herein, my Lords, your wishes sort with mine,

And mine (I hope) do sort with heauenly powers :

For at this instant two neere neyghbouring Kings

Of Cornwall and of Cambria, motion loue

60 To my two daughters, *Gonorill* and *Ragan*.

~~x~~ My youngest daughter, fayre *Cordella*, vowes

65 ~~x~~ No liking to a Monarch, vnlesse loue allowes.

She is sollicited by diuers Peeres ;

But none of them her partiall fancy heares.

Yet, if my policy may her beguyle,

70 ~~x~~ Ile match her to some King within this Ile,

And so establish such a perfit peace,

As fortunes force shall ne're preuayle to cease.

*Perillus.* Of vs & ours, your gracious care, my Lord,

75 Deserues an euerlasting memory,

To be inrol'd in Chronicles of fame,

By neuer-dying perpetuity :

Yet

*and his three daughters.*

Yet to become so prouident a Prince,  
Lose not the title of a louing father :  
Do not force loue, where fancy cannot dwell,  
Lest stremes being stopt, aboue the banks do swell.

✗ *Leir.* I am resolu'd, and euen now my mind !

✗ Doth meditate a sudden stratagem,

✗ To try which of my daughters loues me best :

Which till I know, I cannot be in rest. 80

This graunted, when they ioyntly shall contend,

Eche to exceed the other in their loue :

Then at the vantage will I take *Cordella*,

Euen as she doth protest she loues me best,

Ile say, Then, daughter, graunt me one request,

To shew thou louest me as thy sisters doe,

✗ Accept a husband, whom my selfe will woo.

This sayd, she cannot well deny my sute,

Although (poore soule) her fences will be mute :

✗ Then will I tryumph in my policy,

✗ And match her with a King of Brittany.

*Skal.* Ile to them before, and bewray your secrecy.

*Per.* Thus fathers think their children to beguile,

And oftentimes themselues do first repent,

When heauenly powers do frustrate their intent. *Exeunt.*

*Enter Gonorill and Ragan.*

Sc. ii

*Gon.* I maruell, *Ragan*, how you can indure  
To see that proud pert Peat, our youngest sister,  
So slightly to account of vs, her elders,  
As if we were no better then her selfe !

100

We cannot haue a quaynt deuice so soone,  
Or new made fashion, of our choyce inuention ;  
But if she like it, she will haue the same,  
Or study newer to exceed vs both.

Besides, she is so nice and so demure ;  
So sober, courteous, modest, and precise,  
That all the Court hath worke ynough to do,  
To talke how she exceedeth me and you.

*Ra.* What should I do ? would it were in my power,  
To find a cure for this contagious ill :

110

## *The History of King Leir*

Some desperate medicine must be soone applyed,  
To dimme the glory of her mounting fame;  
Els ere't be long, sheele haue both prick and praise,  
And we must be set by for working dayes.

Doc you not see what seuerall choyce of Suters  
She daily hath, and of the best degree?  
Say, amongst all, she hap to fancy one,  
And haue a husband when as we haue none:  
Why then, by right, to her we must giue place,  
120 Though it be ne're so much to our disgrace.

*Gon.* By my virginity, rather then she shall haue  
A husband before me,  
Ile marry one or other in his shirt:  
And yet I haue made halfe a graunt already  
Of my good will vnto the King of Cornwall.

*Ra.* Sweare not so deeply (sister) herecometh my L. *Skalliger*:  
Something his hasty comming doth import. *Enter Skal.*

*Skal.* Sweet Princesses, I am glad I met you heere so luckily,  
Having good newes which doth concerne you both,  
130 And craueth speedy expedition.

*Ra.* For Gods sake tell vs what it is, my Lord,  
I am with child vntill you vtter it.

*Skal.* Madam, to saue your longing, this it is:  
Your father in great secrecy to day,  
Told me, he meanes to marry you out of hand,  
Vnto the noble Prince of Cambria;  
You, Madam, to the King of Cornwalls Grace:  
Your yonger sister he would fayne bestow  
Vpon the rich King of Hibernia:  
140 But that he doubts, she hardly will consent;  
For hitherto she ne're could fancy him.  
If she do yeeld, why then, betweene you three,  
He will deuide his kingdome for your dowries.  
But yet there is a further mystery,  
Which, so you will conceale, I will disclose.

*Gon.* What e're thou spekest to vs, kind *Skalliger*,  
Thinke that thou spekest it only to thy selfe.

*Skal.* He earnestly desireth for to know,  
Which

*and his three daughters.*

Which of you three do beare most loue to him;  
And on your loues he so extremely dotes,  
As neuer any did, I thinke, before.  
He presently doth meane to send for you,  
To be resolu'd of this tormenting doubt:  
And looke, whose answere pleaseth him the best,  
They shall haue most vnto their marriages.

150

*Ra.* O that I had some pleasing Mermayds voyce,  
For to inchaunt his sencelesse fences with!

*Skal.* For he supposeth that *Cordella* will  
(Striuing to go beyond you in her loue)  
Promise to do what euer he desires:

160

Then will he straight enioyne her for his sake,  
The Hibernian King in marriage for to take.  
This is the summe of all I haue to say;  
Which being done, I humbly take my leaue,  
Not doubting but your wisedomes will foresee,  
What course will best vnto your good agree.

*Gon.* Thanks, gentle *Skalliger*, thy kindnes vndeserued,  
Shall not be vnrequited, if we liue. *Exit Skalliger.*

*Ra.* Now haue we fit occasion offred vs,  
To be reueng'd vpon her vnperceyu'd.

170

*Gon.* Nay, our reuenge we will inflict on her,  
Shall be accounted piety in vs:  
I will so flatter with my doting father,  
As he was ne're so flattred in his life.  
Nay, I will say, that if it be his pleasure,  
To match me to a begger, I will yeeld:  
For why, I know what euer I do say,  
He meanes to match me with the Cornwall King.

*Ra.* Ile say the like: for I am well assured,  
What e're I say to please the old mans mind,  
Who dotes, as if he were a child agayne,  
I shall inioy the noble Cambrian Prince:  
Only, to feed his humour, will suffice,  
To say, I am content with any one  
Whom heele appoyn me; this will please him more,  
Then e're *Apolloes* muslike pleased *Toue*.

180

## *The History of King Leir*

*Gon.* I smile to think, in what a wofull plight  
*Cordella* will be, when we answere thus:

For the will rather dye, then giue consent

190 To ioyne in mariage with the Irish King:  
So will our father think, she loueth him not,  
Because she will not graunt to his desire,  
Which we will aggrauate in such bitter termes,  
That he will foone conuert his loue to hate:

\* For he, you know, is alwayes in extremes.

*Rag.* Not all the world could lay a better plot,  
I long till it be put in practice. *Exeunt.*

*Enter Leir and Perillus.*

*Sc. iii* *Leir.* Perillus, go seeke my daughters,  
200 Will them immediately come and speake with me.

*Per.* I will, my gracious Lord. *Exit.*

*Leir.* Oh, what a combat feelest my panting heart,  
Twixt childrens loue, and care of Common weale!

How deare my daughters are vnto my soule,  
None knowes, but he, that knowes my thoghts & secret deeds.  
Ah, little do they know the deare regard,  
Wherin I hold their future state to come:  
When they securely sleepe on beds of downe,  
These aged eyes do watch for their behalfe:

210 While they like wantons sport in youthfull toyes,  
This throbbing heart is pearst with dire annoyes.  
As doth the Sun exceed the smallest Starre;  
So much the fathers loue exceeds the childs.  
Yet my complaynts are causlesle: for the world  
Affords not children more conformable:  
And yet, me thinks, my mind presageth still  
I know not what; and yet I feare some ill.

*Enter Perillus, with the three daughters.*

Well, here my daughters come: I haue found out  
220 A present meanes to rid me of this doubt.

*Gon.* Our royll Lord and father, in all duty,  
We come to know the tenour of your will,  
Why you so hastily haue sent for vs?

*Leir.* Deare Gonorill, kind Ragan, sweet Cordella,

*and his three daughters.*

Ye florishing branches of a Kingly stocke,  
Sprung from a tree that once did flourish greene,  
Whose blosomes now are nipt with Winters frost,  
And pale grym death doth wayt vpon my steps,  
And summons me vnto his next Assizes.

230

Therefore, deare daughters, as ye tender the safety  
Of him that was the cause of your first being,  
Resolute a doubt which much molests my mind,  
Which of you three to me would proue most kind ;  
Which loues me most, and which at my request  
Will soonest yeeld vnto their fathers heft.

*Gon.* I hope, my gracious father makes no doubt  
Of any of his daughters loue to him :

Yet for my part, to shew my zeale to you,  
Which cannot be in windy words rehearst,  
I prize my loue to you at such a rate,  
I thinke my life inferiour to my loue.  
Should you inioyne me for to tye a milstone  
About my neck, and leape into the Sea,  
At your commaund I willingly would doe it :  
Yea, for to doe you good, I would ascend  
The highest Turret in all Brittany,  
And from the top leape headlong to the ground :  
Nay, more, should you appoyn me for to marry  
The meanest vassayle in the spacious world,  
Without reply I would accomplish it :  
In briefe, commaund what euer you desire,  
And if I fayle, no fauour I require.

240

*Leir.* O, how thy words reuiue my dying soule !

*Cor.* O, how I doe abhorre this flattery !

*Leir.* But what sayth *Ragan* to her fathers will ?

*Rag.* O, that my simble vtterance could suffice,  
To tell the true intention of my heart,  
Which burnes in zeale of duty to your grace,  
And neuer can be quench'd, but by desire  
To shew the same in outward forwardnesse.  
Oh, that there were some other mayd that durst  
But make a challenge of her loue with me ;

250

B

Ide

260

## *The History of King Leir*

Ide make her soone confess she neuer loued  
Her father halfe so well as I doe you.

I then, my deeds should proue in playner case,  
How much my zeale aboundeth to your grace:  
But for them all, let this one meane suffice,  
To ratify my loue before your eyes:  
I haue right noble Suters to my loue,

270 No worse then Kings, and happelly I loue one:  
Yet, would you haue me make my choyce anew,

¶ Ide bridle fancy, and be rulde by you.

*Leir.* Did neuer *Pbilonel* sing so sweet a note.

*Cord.* Did neuer flatterer tell so false a tale.

*Leir.* Speak now, *Cordella*, make my ioyes at full,  
And drop downe Nectar from thy hony lips.

*Cvr.* I cannot paynt my duty forth in words,  
I hope my deeds shall make report for me:  
But looke what loue the child doth owe the father,

280 The same to you I beare, my gracious Lord.

*Gon.* Here is an answere answerlesse indeed:  
Were you my daughter, I should scarcely brooke it.

*Rag.* Dost thou not blush, proud Peacock as thou art,  
To make our father such a slight reply?

*Leir.* Why how now, Minion, are you growne so proud?  
Doth our deare loue make you thus peremptory?  
What, is your loue become so small to vs,  
As that you scorne to tell vs what it is?  
Do you loue vs, as euery child doth loue

290 Their father? True indeed, as some,  
Who by disobedience short their fathers dayes,  
And so would you; some are so father-sick,  
That they make meanes to rid them from the world;  
And so would you: some are indifferent,  
Whether their aged parents liue or dye;  
And so are you. But, didst thou know, proud gyrtle,  
What care I had to foster thee to this,  
Ah, then thou wouldst say as thy sisters do:  
Our life is lesse, then loue we owe to you.

300 *Cord.* Deare father, do not so mistake my words,  
Nor

*and his three daughters.*

Nor my playne meaning be misconstrued;  
My young was nevere vsde to flattery.

*Gon.* You were not best say I flatter: if you do,  
My deeds shall shew, I flatter not with you.  
I loue my father better then thou canst.

*Cor.* The prayse were great, spoke from anothers mouth:  
But it should seeme your neighbours dwell far off.

*Rag.* Nay, here is one, that will confirme as much  
As she hath sayd, both for my selfe and her.  
I say, thou doft not wish my fathers good.

310

*Cord.* Deare father.—

*Leir.* Peace, baftard Impe, no iſſue of King *Leir*,  
I will not heare thee speake one tittle more.  
Call not me father, if thou loue thy life,  
Nor these thy ſisters once preſume to name:  
Looke for no helpe henceforth from me nor mine;  
Shift as thou wilt, and truſt vnto thy ſelfe:  
My Kingdome will I equally deuide  
Twixt thy two ſisters to their royll dowre,  
And will beſtow them worthy their deſerts:  
This done, because thou ſhalt not haue the hope,  
To haue a childs part in the time to come,  
I preſently will diſpoſeſſe my ſelfe,  
And ſet vp theſe vpon my princely throne.

320

*Gon.* I euer thought that pride would haue a fall.

*Ra.* Plaine dealing, ſister: your beauty is ſo ſheene,  
You need no dowry, to make you be a Queene.

*Exeunt Leir, Gonorill, Ragan.*

*Cord.* Now whither, poore forsaken, ſhall I goe,  
When mine own ſisters tryumph in my woe?  
But vnto him which doth protect the iuft,  
In him will poore *Cordella* put her truſt.  
These hands shall labour, for to get my ſpending;  
And ſo ile liue vntill my dayes haue ending.

330

*Per.* Oh, how I grieue, to ſee my Lord thus fond,  
To dote ſo much vpon vayne flattering words.  
Ah, if he but with good aduice had weyghed,  
The hidden tenure of her humble ſpeech,



## *The History of King Leir*

Reason to rage should not haue giuen place,

340 Nor poore *Cordella* suffer such disgrace. *Exit.*

*Sc. iv* *Enter the Gallian King with Mumford, and three Nobles more.*

*King.* Diffwade me not, my Lords, I am resolu'd,  
This next fayre wynd to sayle for Brittany,  
In some disguife, to fee if flying fame  
Be not too prodigall in the wondrous prayfe  
Of these three Nymphes, the daughters of King *Leir*.  
If present view do anfwere absent prayfe,  
And eyes allow of what our eares haue heard,

350 And *Venus* stand auspicious to my vowes,  
And Fortune fauour what I take in hand ;  
I will returne seyz'd of as rich a prize  
As *Iason*, when he wannte the golden fleece.

*Mum.* Heauens graut you may ; the match were ful of honor,  
And well beſeeming the young Gallian King.  
I would your Grace would fauour me ſo much,  
As make me partner of your Pilgrimage.  
I long to fee the gallant Brittish Dames,  
And feed mine eyes vpon their rare perfections :

360 For till I know the contrary, Ile ſay,  
Our Dames in Fraunce are more fayre then they.

*Kim.* Lord *Mumford*, you haue fau'd me a labour,  
In offring that which I did meane to aske :  
And I moft willingly accept your company.  
Yet firſt I will inioyne you to obſerue  
Some few conditions which I ſhall propoſe.

*Mum.* So that you do not tye mine eyes for looking  
After the amorous glaunces of fayre Dames :  
So that you do not tye my young from ſpeaking,  
370 My lips from kiffing when occation ſerues,  
My hands from congees, and my knees to bow  
To gallant Gyres ; which were a taske more hard,  
Then flesh and bloud is able to indure :  
Commaund what elſe you pleafe, I reſt content.

*Kim.* To bind thee from a thing thou canſt not leau'e,  
Were but a meane to make thee ſeeke it more :

And

*and his three daughters.*

And therefore speake, looke, kisse, salute for me ;  
In these my selfe am like to second thee.  
Now heare thy taske. I charge thee from the time  
That first we set sayle for the Brittish shore,  
To vse no words of dignity to me,  
But in the friendliest maner that thou canst,  
Make vse of me as thy companion :  
For we will go disguisde in Palmers weeds,  
That no man shall mistrust vs what we are.

380

*Mum.* If that be all, ile fit your turne, I warrant you. I am  
some kin to the Blunts, and I think, the bluntest of all my kin-  
dred ; therfore if I bee too blunt with you, thank your selfe for  
praying me to be so.

*King.* Thy pleasantcompany will make the way seeme short. 390  
It resteth now, that in my absence hence,  
I do commit the gouernment to you  
My trustry Lords and faythfull Counsellers.  
Time cutteth off the rest I haue to say :  
The wynd blowes fayre, and I must needs away.

*Nobles.* Heauens send your voyage to as good effect,  
As we your land do purpose to protect. *Excunt.*

Sc. v

*Enter the King of Cornwall and his man booted and  
spurd, a riding wand, and a letter in his hand.*

*Corn.* But how far distant are we from the Court ?

400

*Ser.* Some twenty miles, my Lord, or thereabouts.

*Corn.* It seemeth to me twenty thousand myles :

Yet hope I to be there within this houre.

*Ser.* Then are you like to ride alone for me. *to him-  
selfe.*  
I thinke, my Lord is weary of his life.

*Corn.* Sweet *Gonorill*, I long to see thy face,  
Which haft so kindly gratified my loue.

*Enter the King of Cambria booted and spurd, and his  
man with a wand and a letter.*

*Cam.* Get a fresh horse: for by my soule I sweare, *He lookes* 410  
I am past patience, longer to forbeare *on the  
The wished fight of my beloued mistris,* *letter.*  
Deare *Ragan*, stay and comfort of my life.

*Ser.* Now what in Gods name doth my Lord intend? *to him-  
He selfe.*

## *The History of King Leir*

He thinks he ne're shall come at's iourneyes end.  
I would he had old *Dedalus* waxen wings,  
That he might flye, so I might stay behind :  
For e're we get to Troynonant, I fee,  
He quite will tyre himselfe, his horse and me.

420      *Cornwall & Cambria looke one upon another, and  
start to see eche other there.*

*Corn.* Brother of Cambria, we greet you well,  
As one whom here we little did expect.

*Cam.* Brother of Cornwall, met in happy time :  
I thought as much to haue met with the Souldan of Persia,  
As to haue met you in this place, my Lord.  
No doubt, it is about some great affayres,  
That makes you here so slenderly accompanied.

*Corn.* To say the truth, my Lord, it is no leſſe,  
430 And for your part some hasty wind of chance  
Hath blowne you hither thus vpon the sudden.

*Cam.* My Lord, to break off further circumstances,  
For at this time I cannot brooke delayes :  
Tell you your reason, I will tell you mine.

*Corn.* In fayth content, and therefore to be briefe ;  
For I am sure my haste's as great as yours :  
I am sent for, to come vnto King *Leir*,  
Who by these present letters promifeth  
His eldest daughter, louely *Gonorill*,  
440 To me in mariage, and for present dowry,  
The moity of halfe his Regiment.  
The Ladies loue I long ago posſeſt :  
But vntill now I neuer had the fathers.

*Cam.* You tell me wonders, yet I will relate  
Strange newes, and henceforth we muſt brothers call ;  
Witneſſe these lynes : his honourable age,  
Being weary of the troubles of his Crowne,  
His princely daughter *Ragan* will bestow  
On me in mariage, with halfe his Seigniories,  
450 Whom I would gladly haue accepted of,  
With the third part, her complements are ſuch.

*Corn.* If I haue one halfe, and you haue the other,  
Then

*and his three daughters.*

Then betweene vs we must needs haue the whole.

*Cam.* The hole! how meane you that? Zlood, I hope,  
We shall haue two holes betweene vs.

*Corn.* Why, the whole Kingdome.

*Cam.* I, that's very true.

*Cor.* What then is left for his third daughters dowry,  
Louely *Cordella*, whom the world admires?

*Cam.* Tis very strange, I know not what to thinke,  
Vnlesse they meane to make a Nunne of her. 460

*Corn.* Twere pity such rare beauty should be hid  
Within the compasse of a Cloysters wall:  
But howsoe're, if *Leirs* words proue true,  
It will be good, my Lord, for me and you.

*Cam.* Then let vs haste, all danger to preuent,  
For feare delayes doe alter his intent. *Excunt.*

*Enter Gonorill and Ragan.*

Sc. vi

*Gon.* Sister, when did you see *Cordella* last,  
That pretie piece, that thinks none good ynough  
To speake to her, because (sir-reuerence)  
She hath a little beauty extraordinary?

470

*Ra.* Since time my father warnd her from his presence,  
I neuer saw her, that I can remember.  
God give her ioy of her surpassing beauty;  
I thinke, her dowry will be small ynough.

*Gon.* I haue incenst my father so against her,  
As he will neuer be reclaymd agayne.

*Rag.* I was not much behind to do the like.

*Gon.* Faith, sister, what moues you to beare her such good 480

*Rag.* Intruth, I thinke, the same that moueth you; (will?)  
Because she doth surpasse vs both in beauty.

*Gon.* Beshrew your fingers, how right you can gesse:  
I tell you true, it cuts me to the heart.

*Rag.* But we will keepe her low enough, I warrant,  
And clip her wings for mounting vp too hye.

*Gon.* Who euer hath her, shall haue a rich mariage of her.

*Rag.* She were right fit to make a Parsons wife:  
For they, men say, do loue faire women well,

## *The History of King Leir*

490 And many times doe marry them with nothing.

*Gon.* With nothing! marry God forbid: why, are there any  
*Rag.* I meane, no money. (such?)

*Gon.* I cry you mercy, I mistooke you much:

And she is far too stately for the Church;  
Sheele lay her husbands Benefice on her back,  
Euen in one gowne, if she may haue her will.

*Ra.* In faith, poore soule, I pitty her a little.  
Would she were leffe fayre, or more fortunate.  
Well, I thinke long vntill I see my *Morgan*,

500 The gallant Prince of Cambria, here arriue.

*Gon.* And so do I, vntill the Cornwall King  
Present himselfe, to consummate my ioyes.  
Peace, here commeth my father.

*Enter Leir, Perillus and others.*

*Leir.* Cease, good my Lords, and sue not to reuerset  
Our censure, which is now irrevocable.

We haue dispatched letters of contract  
Vnto the Kings of Cambria and of Cornwall;  
Our hand and seale will iustify no leffe:

510 Then do not so dishonour me, my Lords,  
As to make shipwrack of our kingly word.  
I am as kind as is the Pellican, —

That kils it selfe, to sauе her young ones liues:  
And yet as ielous as the princely Eagle,  
That kils her young ones, if they do but dazell  
Vpon the radiant splendor of the Sunne.

Within this two dayes I expect their comming.  
But in good time, they are arriu'd already.  
This haste of yours, my Lords, doth testify

520 The feruent loue you beare vnto my daughters:  
And think your selues as welcome to King *Leir*,  
As euer *Pryams* children were to him.

*Corn.* My gracious Lord, and father too, I hope,  
Pardon, for that I made no greater haste:  
But were my horse as swift as was my will,  
I long ere this had seene your Maiesty.

*Cam.* No other scuse of absence can I frame,

*Enter  
Kings of  
Cornwall  
and Cam-  
bia.*

Then

*and his three daughters.*

Then what my brother hath inform'd your Grace :  
For our vndeserued welcome, we do vowe,  
Perpetually to rest at your commaund.

530

*Corn.* But you, sweet Loue, illustrious *Gonorill*,  
The Regent, and the Soueraigne of my soule,  
Is *Cornwall* welcome to your Excellency ?

*Gon.* As welcome, as *Leander* was to *Her*,  
Or braue *Acneas* to the Carthage Queene :  
So and more welcome is your Grace to me.

*Cam.* O, may my fortune proue no worse then his,  
Since heauens do know, my fancy is as much.  
Deare *Ragan*, say, if welcome vnto thee,  
All welcomes else will little comfort me.

540

*Rag.* As gold is welcome to the couetous eye,  
As sleepe is welcome to the Traueller,  
As is fresh water to sea-beaten men,  
Or moystned showres vnto the parched ground,  
Or any thing more welcomer then this,  
So and more welcome louely *Morgan* is.

*Leir.* What resteth then, but that we consummate,  
The celebration of these nuptiall Rites ?  
My Kingdome I do equally deuide.  
Princes, draw lots, and take your chaunce as falles.

550

*Then they draw lots.*

These I refigne as freely vnto you,  
As earst by true succeſſion they were mine.  
And here I do freely dispossesse my ſelfe,  
And make you two my true adopted heyres :  
My ſelfe will ſoiorne with my ſonne of Cornwall,  
And take me to my prayers and my beades.  
I know, my daughter *Ragan* will be forry,  
Because I do not ſpend my dayes with her :  
Would I were able to be with both at once ;  
They are the kindeſt Gyrles in Christendome.

560

*Per.* I haue bin ſilent all this while, my Lord,  
To ſee if any worthyer then my ſelfe,  
Would once haue ſpoke in poore *Cordellaes* cauſe :  
But loue or feare tyes ſilence to their toungs.

C

Oh,

## *The History of King Leir*

Oh, heare me speake for her, my gracious Lord,  
Whose deeds haue not deseru'd this ruthlesse doome,  
As thus to disinherit her of all.

*Leir.* Vrge this no more, and if thou loue thy life :  
570 I say, she is no daughter, that doth scorne  
To tell her father how she loueth him.  
Who euer speaketh hereof to mee agayne,  
I will esteeme him for my mortall foe.  
Come, let vs in, to celebrate with ioy,  
The happy Nuptials of these louely payres.

*Exeunt omnes, manet Perillus.*

{ *Per.* Ah, who so blind, as they that will not see  
The neere approch of their owne misery ?  
Poore Lady, I extremely pitty her :  
580 And whilest I liue, eche drop of my heart blood,  
Will I strayne forth, to do her any good. *Exit.*  
Sc. vii *Enter the Gallian King, and Mumford, disguised  
like Pilgrims.*

*Mum.* My Lord, how do you brook this Brittish ayre ?

*King.* My Lord ? I told you of this foolish humour,  
And bound you to the contrary, you know.

*Mum.* Pardon me for once, my Lord ; I did forget.

*King.* My Lord agayne ? then let's haue nothing else,  
And so be tane for spyes, and then tis well.

590 *Mum.* Swounds, I could bite my young in two for anger :  
For Gods sake name your selfe some proper name.

*King.* Call me *Trefillus* : Ile call thee *Denapoll*.

*Mum.* Might I be made the Monarch of the world,  
I could not hit vpon these names, I sweare.

*King.* Then call me *Will*, ile call thee *Jacke*.

*Mum.* Well, be it so, for I haue wel deseru'd to be cal'd *Jack*.

*King.* Stand close; for here a Brittish Lady cōmeth : *Enter*  
A fayrer creature ne're mine eyes beheld. *Cordella.*

*Cord.* This is a day of ioy vnto my sisters,  
600 Wherein they both are maried vnto Kings ;

And I, by byrth, as worthy as themselues,  
Am turnd into the world, to seeke my fortune.  
How may I blame the fickle *Qeene of Chaunce*,

That



## *The History of King Leir*

*King.* The silly mouse, by vertue of her teeth,  
Releaf'd the princely Lyon from the net.

*Cor.* Kind Palmer, which so much desir'st to heare  
The tragick tale of my vnhappy youth:  
Know this in briefe, I am the haplesse daughter  
Of *Leir*, sometimes King of Brittany.

*King.* Why, who debarres his honourable age,  
From being still the King of Brittany?

650 *Cor.* None, but himselfe hath dispossess'd himselfe,  
And giuen all his Kingdome to the Kings  
Of Cornwall and of Cambria, with my sisters.

*King.* Hath he giuen nothing to your louely selfe?

*Cor.* He lou'd me not, & therfore gaue me nothing,  
Only because I could not flatter him:  
And in this day of tryumph to my sisters,  
Doth Fortune tryumph in my ouerthrow.

660 *King.* Sweet Lady, say there should come a King,  
As good as eyther of your sisters husbands,  
To craue your loue, would you accept of him?

*Cor.* Oh, doe not mocke with those in misery,  
Nor do not think, though fortune have the power,  
To spoyle mine honour, and debase my state,  
That she hath any interest in my mind:  
For if the greatest Monarch on the earth,  
Should sue to me in this extremity,  
Except my heart could loue, and heart could like,  
Better then any that I euer saw,  
His great estate no more should moue my mind,  
670 Then mountaynes moue by blast of euery wind.

*King.* Think not, sweet Nymph, tis holy Palmers guise,  
To grieued soules fresh torments to deuise:  
Therefore in witnesse of my true intent,  
Let heauen and earth beare record of my words:  
There is a young and lusty Gallian King,  
So like to me, as I am to my selfe,  
That earnestly doth craue to haue thy loue,  
And ioyne with thee in *Hymens* sacred bonds.

*Cor.* The like to thee did ne're these eyes behold;

Oh

*and his three daughters.*

Oh lieu to adde new torments to my griefe :  
Why didſt thou thus intrap me vnawares ?  
Ah Palmer, my estate doth not beſit  
A kingly mariage, as the caſe now ſtands.  
Whilome when as I liu'd in honours height,  
A Prince perhaps might poſtulate my loue :  
Now miſery, diſhonour and diſgrace,  
Hath light on me, and quite reuerſt the caſe.  
Thy King will hold thee wife, if thou ſurceafe  
The ſute, whereas no dowry will infue.  
Then be aduised, Palmer, what to do :  
Ceafe for thy King, ſeeke for thy ſelfe to woo.

680

*King.* Your birth's too high for any, but a King.

*Cor.* My mind is low ynough to loue a Palmer,  
Rather then any King vpon the earth.

*King.* O, but you neuer can indure their life,  
Which is ſo ſtraight and full of penury.

*Cor.* O yes, I can, and happy if I might :  
Ile hold thy Palmers ſtaffe within my hand,  
And thiſke it is the Scepter of a Queene.  
Sometime ile ſet thy Bonnet on my head,  
And thiſke I weare a rich imperiaſl Crowne.  
Sometime ile helpe thee in thy holy prayers,  
And thiſke I am with thee in Paradife.  
Thus ile mock fortune, as ſhe mocketh me,  
And neuer will my louely choyce repent :  
For hauing thee, I ſhall haue all content.

700

*King.* Twere fin to hold her longer in ſuſpence,  
Since that my foule hath vow'd ſhe shall be mine.

Ah, deare Cordella, cordiall to my heart,  
I am no Palmer, as I ſeeme to be,  
But hither come in this vnknowne diſguife,  
To view th'admir'd beauty of thofe eyes.  
I am the King of Gallia, gentle mayd,  
(Although thus ſlenderly accompanied)  
And yet thy vaffayle by imperious Loue,  
And ſworne to ſerue thee euerlaſtingly.

710

*Cor.* What e're you be, of high or low diſcent,

## *The History of King Leir*

All's one to me, I do request but this:  
That as I am, you will accept of me,  
720 And I will haue you whatsoe're you be:  
Yet well I know, you come of royll race,  
I see such sparks of honour in your face:

*Mum.* Haue Palmers weeds such power to win fayre Ladies?  
Fayth, then I hope the next that falles is myne:  
Vpon condition I no worse might speed,  
I would for euer weare a Palmers weed.  
I like an honest and playne dealing wench,  
That sweares (without exceptions) I will haue you.  
These foppets, that know not whether to loue a man or no, ex-  
730 cept they first go aske their mothers leaue, by this hand, I hate  
them ten tymes worse then poyson.

*King.* What resteth then our happinesse to procure?

*Mum.* Fayth, go to Church, to make the matter sure.

*King.* It shall be so, because the world shall say,  
King *Leirs* three daughters were wedded in one day:  
The celebration of this happy chaunce,  
We will deferre, vntill we come to Fraunce.

*Mum.* I like the wooing, that's not long a doing.  
Well, for her sake, I know what I know:  
740 Ile neuer marry whilst I liue,  
Except I haue one of these Brittish Ladyes,  
My humour is alienated from the mayds of Fraunce. *Exeunt.*

*Sc. viii*

*Enter Perillus solus.*

*Per.* The King hath dispossest himselfe of all,  
Those to aduaunce, which scarce will giue him thanks:  
His youngest daughter he hath turnd away,  
And no man knowes what is become of her.  
He soiournes now in Cornwall with the eldest,  
Who flattred him, vntill she did obtayne  
750 That at his hands, which now she doth possesse:  
And now she sees hee hath no more to giue,  
It grieues her heart to see her father liue.  
Oh, whom should man trust in this wicked age,  
When children thus against their parents rage?  
But he, the myrrour of mild patience,

*Puts*

*and his three daughters.*

Puts vp all wrongs, and neuer giues reply :  
Yet shames she not in most opprobrious sort,  
To call him foole and doterd to his face,  
And sets her Parasites of purpose oft,  
In scoffing wife to offer him disgrace.

Oh yron age ! O times ! O monstros, vilde,  
When parents are contemned of the child ! /  
His pension she hath halfe restrain'd from him,  
And will, e're long, the other halfe, I feare :  
For she thinks nothing is beftowde in vayne,  
But that which doth her fathers life maintayne.  
Trust not alliance ; but trust strangers rather,  
Since daughters proue disloyall to the father.  
Well, I will counsell him the best I can :  
Would I were able to redresse his wrong.

Yet what I can, vnto my vtmost power,  
He shall be sure of to the lateſt hour.

760

*Exit.*

770

*Enter Gonorill, and Skalliger.*

*S. ix*

Gon. I prithy, *Skalliger*, tell me what thou thinkſt :  
Could any woman of our dignity  
Endure ſuch quips and peremptory taunts,  
As I do daily from my doting father ?  
Doth' not ſuffice that I him keepe of almes,  
Who is not able for to keepe himſelfe ?  
But as if he were our better, he ſhould thinke  
To check and ſnap me vp at euery word.  
I cannot make me a new fashioned gowne,  
And ſet it forth with more then common cost ;  
But his old doting doltiſh withered wit,  
Is ſure to giue a ſenceleſſe check for it.  
I cannot make a banquet extraordinary,  
To grace my ſelfe, and ſpread my name abroad,  
But he, old foole, is captious by and by,  
And ſayth, the cost would well ſuffice for twice.  
Iudge then, I pray, what reaſon iſt, that I  
Should ſtand alone charg'd with his vaine expence,  
And that my ſister *Ragan* ſhould go free,  
To whom he gaue as much, as vnto me ?

780

790

## *The History of King Leir*

I prithy, *Skalliger*, tell me, if thou know,  
By any meanes to rid me of this woe.

*Skal.* Your many fauours still bestowde on me,  
Binde me in duty to aduise your Grace,  
How you may soonest remedy this ill.

The large allowance which he hath from you,  
800 Is that which makes him so forget himselfe:  
Therefore abridge it halfe, and you shall see,  
That hauing lessle, he will more thankfull be:  
For why, abundance maketh vs forget  
The fountaynes whence the benefits do spring.

*Gon.* Well, *Skalliger*, for thy kynd aduice herein,  
I will not be vngratefull, if I liue:  
I haue restrayned halfe his portion already,  
And I will presently restrayne the other,  
That hauing no meanes to releue himselfe,  
810 He may go seeke elsewhere for better helpe. *Exit.*

*Skal.* Go, viperous woman, shame to all thy sexe:  
The heauens, no doubt, will punish thee for this:  
And me a villayne, that to curry fauour,  
Haue giuen the daughter counsell 'gainst the father.  
But vs the world doth this experience giue,  
That he that cannot flatter, cannot liue. *Exit.*

sc. x *Enter King of Cornwall, Leir, Perillus & Nobles.*

*Corn.* Father, what ayleth you to be so sad?  
Me thinks, you frollike not as you were wont.

820 *Leir.* The neerer we do grow vnto our graues,  
The lessle we do delight in worldly ioyes.

*Corn.* But if a man can frame himselfe to myrth,  
It is a meane for to prolong his life.

*Leir.* Then welcome sorrow, *Leirs* only friend,  
Who doth desire his troubled dayes had end.

*Corn.* Comfort your selfe, father, here comes your daughter,  
Who much will grieue, I kuow, to see you sad. *Enter*

*Leir.* But more doth grieue, I feare, to see me liue. *Gonorill.*

*Corn.* My *Gonorill*, you come in wished time,  
830 To put your father from these pensiue dumps.  
In fayth, I feare that all things go not well.

*Gon.* What,

*and his three daughters.*

*Gon.* What, do you feare, that I haue angred him?  
Hath he complaynd of me vnto my Lord?  
Ile prouide him a piece of bread and cheese; ✕  
For in a time heele practise nothing else,  
Then carry tales from one vnto another.  
Tis all his practise for to kindle strife,  
Twixt you, my Lord, and me your louing wife:  
But I will take an order, if I can,  
To cease th'effect, where first the cause began.

840

*Corn.* Sweet, be not angry in a partiall cause,  
He ne're complaynd of thee in all his life.  
Father, you must not weygh a womans words.

*Leir.* Alas, not I: poore soule, she breeds yong bones,  
And that is it makes her so tutchy sure.

*Gon.* What, breeds young bones already! you will make  
An honest woman of me then, belike.

O vild olde wretch! who euer heard the like,  
That seeketh thus his owne child to defame?

*Corn.* I cannot stay to heare this discord found. *Exit.* 850

*Gon.* For any one that loues your company,  
You may go pack, and seeke some other place,  
To fowe the seed of discord and disgrace. *Exit.*

*Leir.* Thus, say or do the best that e're I can,  
Tis wrested straight into another sence.  
This punishment my heauy finnes deserue,  
And more then this ten thousand thousand times:  
Else aged *Leir* them could neuer find  
Cruell to him, to whom he hath bin kind.

Why do I ouer-liue my selfe, to see  
The course of nature quite reuerst in me?  
Ah, gentle Death, if euer any wight  
Did wish thy presence with a perfit zeale:  
Then come, I pray thee, euen with all my heart,  
And end my sorrowes with thy fatall dart. *He weepes.* 860

*Per.* Ah, do not so disconfolate your selfe,  
Nor dew your aged cheeks with wasting teares.

*Leir.* What man art thou that takest any pity  
Vpon the worthlesse state of old *Leir*?

D

*Per.* One,

## *The History of King Leir*

870 *Per.* One, who doth beare as great a share of griefe,  
As if it were my dearest fathers case.

*Leir.* Ah, good my friend, how ill art thou aduisde,  
For to confort with miserable men :  
Go learne to flatter, where thou mayst in time  
Get fauour 'mongst the mighty, and so clyme :  
For now I am so poore and full of want,  
As that I ne're can recompence thy loue.

*Per.* What's got by flattery, doth not long indure ;  
And men in fauour live not most secure.

880 My conscience tels me, if I should forsake you,  
I were the hatefulst excrement on the earth :  
Which well do know, in course of former time,  
How good my Lord hath bin to me and mine.

*Leir.* Did I ere rayse thee higher then the rest  
Of all thy ancestors which were before ?

*Per.* I ne're did seeke it ; but by your good Grace,  
I still injoyed my owne with quietnesse.

*Leir.* Did I ere give thee liuing, to increase  
The due reuennues which thy father left ?

890 *Per.* I had ynough, my Lord, and hauing that,  
What should you need to give me any more ?

*Leir.* Oh, did I euer dispossesse my selfe,  
And give thee halfe my Kingdome in good will ?

*Per.* Alas, my Lord, there were no reason, why  
You should haue such a thought, to give it me.

*Leir.* Nay, if thou talke of reason, then be mute ;  
For with good reason I can thee confute.  
If they, which first by natures sacred law,  
Do owe to me the tribute of their liues ;  
900 If they to whom I alwayes haue bin kinde,  
And bountifull beyond comparison ;  
If they, for whom I haue vn done my selfe,  
And brought my age vnto this extreme want,  
Do now reiect, contemne, despise, abhor me,  
What reason moueth thee to sorrow for me ?

*Per.* Where reason fayles, let teares confirme my loue,  
And speake how much your passions do me moue.

Ah,

*and his three daughters.*

Ah, good my Lord, condemne not all for one :  
You haue two daughters left, to whom I know  
You shall be welcome, if you please to go.

*Leir.* Oh, how thy words adde sorrow to my soule,  
To thinke of my vnkindnesse to *Cordella* ! } 910  
Whom causelesse I did dispossesse of all,  
Vpon th'vnkind suggestions of her sisters :  
And for her sake, I thinke this heauy doome  
Is falne on me, and not without desert :  
Yet vnto *Ragan* was I alwayes kinde,  
And gaue to her the halfe of all I had :  
It may be, if I should to her repayre,  
She would be kinder, and intreat me fayre.

*Per.* No doubt she would, & practise ere't be long,  
By force of Armes for to redresse your wrong.

*Leir.* Well, since thou doest aduise me for to go,  
I am resolu'd to try the worst of wo. *Exeunt.*

*Enter Ragan solus.*

*Rag.* How may I bleffe the howre of my natiuity,  
Which bodeth vnto me such happy Starres !  
How may I thank kind fortune, that vouchsafes  
To all my actions, such desir'd euent !  
I rule the King of Cambria as I please : 930  
The States are all obedient to my will ;  
And looke what ere I say, it shall be so ;  
Not any one, that dareth answere no.  
My eldest sister liues in royll state,  
And wanteth nothing fitting her degree :  
Yet hath she such a cooling card withall,  
As that her hony faoureth much of gall.  
My father with her is quarter-master still,  
And many times restraynes her of her will :  
But if he were with me, and seru'd me so,  
Ide send him packing some where else to go. 940  
Ide entertayne him with such slender cost,  
That he should quickly wil to change his host. *Exit.*

*Enter Cornwall, Gonorill, and attendants.*

*Corn.* Ah, *Gonorill*, what dire vnhappy chaunce

## *The History of King Leir*

Hath sequestred thy father from our presence,  
That no report can yet be heard of him?  
Some great vnkindnesse hath bin offred him,  
Exceeding far the bounds of patience:  
950 Else all the world shall neuer me perswade,  
He would forsake vs without notice made.

*Gen.* Alas, my Lord, whom doth it touch so neere,  
Or who hath interest in this griefe, but I,  
Whom sorrow had brought to her longest home,  
But that I know his qualities so well?  
I know, he is but stolne vpon my sister  
At vnawares, to see her how she fares,  
And spend a little time with her, to note  
How all things goe, and how she likes her choyce:  
960 And when occasion serues, heele steale from her,  
And vnawares returne to vs agayne.  
Therefore, my Lord, be frolick, and resolute  
To see my father here agayne e're long.

*Com.* I hope so too; but yet to be more sure,  
Ile send a Poste immediately to know  
Whether he be arriued there or no. *Exit.*

*Gen.* But I will intercept the Messenger,  
And temper him before he doth depart,  
With sweet perswasions, and with sound rewards,  
970 That his report shall ratify my speech,  
And make my Lord cease further to inquire.  
If he be not gone to my sisters Court,  
As sure my mind presageth that he is,  
He happily may, by trauelling vnkownne wayes,  
Fall sicke, and as a common passenger,  
Be dead and buried: would God it were so well;  
For then there were no more to do, but this,  
He went away, and none knowes where he is.  
But say he be in Cambria with the King,  
980 And there exlayme against me, as he will:  
I know he is as welcome to my sister,  
As water is into a broken ship.  
Well, after him Ile send such thunderclaps

Of

*and his three daughters.*

Of slander, scandall, and inuented tales,  
That all the blame shall be remou'd from me,  
And vnderceiu'd rebound vpon himselfe.  
Thus with one nayle another Ile expell,  
And make the world iudge, that I vsde him well.

*Enter the Messenger that shoulde go to Cambria,  
with a letter in his hand.*

990

*Gon.* My honest friend, whither away so fast?

*Mes.* To Cambria, Madam, with letters frō the king.

*Gon.* To whom?

*Mess.* Vnto your father, if he be there.

*Gon.* Let me see them. *She opens them.*

*Mess.* Madam, I hope your Grace will stand  
Betweene me and my neck-verse, if I be  
Calld in question, for opening the Kings letters.

*Gon.* Twas I that opened them, it was not thou.

*Mes.* I, but you need not care: and so must I,  
A hanosome man, be quickly trust vp,  
And when a man's hang'd, all the world cannot saue him.

1000

*Gon.* He that hangs thee, were better hang his father,  
Or that but hurts thee in the least degree.  
I tell thee, we make great account of thee.

*Mes.* I am o're-joy'd, I surfeit of sweet words:  
Kind Queene, had I a hundred liues, I would  
Spend ninety nyne of them for you, for that word.

*Gon.* I, but thou wouldest keepe one life still,  
And that's as many as thou art like to haue.

1010

*Mes.* That one life is not too deare for my good Queene; this  
fword, this buckler, this head, this heart, these hands, armes,  
legs, tripes, bowels, and all the members else whatsoeuer, are at  
your dispose; vse me, trust me, commaund me: if I fayle in any  
thing, tye me to a dung cart, and make a Scauengers horse of  
me, and whip me, so long as I haue any skin on my back.

*Gon.* In token of further imployment, take that.

*Flings him a purse.*

*Mes.* A strong Bond, a firme Obligation, good in law, good  
in law: if I keepe not the condition, let my necke be the forsey-  
ture of my negligence.

1020

## *The History of King Leir*

*Gon.* I like thee well, thou hast a good young.

*Mef.* And as bad a young if it be set on it, as any Oysterwife at Billingsgate hath: why, I haue made many of my neighbours forsake their houses with rayling vpon them, and go dwell else where; and so by my meanes houses haue bin good cheape in our parish: My young being well whetted with choller, is more sharpe then a Razer of Palerno.

*Gon.* O, thou art a fit man for my purpose.

1030 *Mef.* Commend me not, sweet Queene, before you try me.

✓ As my deserts are, so do think of me.

*Gon.* Well sayd, then this is thy tryall: Instead of carrying the Kings letters to my father, carry thou these letters to my sister, which contayne matter quite contrary to the other: there shal she be giuen to vnderstand, that my father hath detracted her, giuen out flaundrous speaches against her; and that hee hath most intollerably abused me, set my Lord and me at variance, and made mutinyes amongst the commons.

These things (although it be not so)

1040 Yet thou must affirme them to be true,  
With othes and protestations as will serue,  
To driue my sister out of loue with him,  
And cause my will accomplished to be.  
This do, thou wilst my fauour for euer,  
And makest a hye way of preferment to thee  
And all thy friends.

1050 *Mef.* It sufficeth, conceyт it is already done:  
I will so young-whip him, that I will  
Leave him as bare of credit, as a Poult  
Leaves a Cony, when she pulls off his skin.

*Gon.* Yet there is a further matter.

*Mef.* I thirst to heare it.

*Gon.* If my sister thinketh conuenient, as my letters importeth, to make him away, haft thou the heart to effect it?

*Mef.* Few words are best in so small a matter:  
These are but trifles. By this booke I will.

*kisse the paper.*

*Gon.* About:

*and bis three daughters.*

*Gon.* About it presently, I long till it be done.

*Mef.* I fly, I fly. *Exeunt.*

*Enter Cordella solus.*

I haue bin ouer-negligent to day,  
In going to the Temple of my God,  
To render thanks for all his benefits,  
Which he miraculouly hath bestowed on me,  
In raysing me out of my meane estate,  
When as I was deuoyd of worldly friends,  
And placing me in such a sweet content,  
As far exceeds the reach of my deserts.

My kingly husband, myrroure of his time,  
For zeale, for iustice, kindneffe, and for care  
To God, his subiects, me, and Common weale,  
By his appoyntment was ordayneid for me.

I cannot wish the thing that I do want;  
I cannot want the thing but I may haue,  
Saue only this whiche I shall ne're obtayne,  
My fathers loue, oh this I ne're shall gayne.

I would abstayne from any nutryment,  
And pyne my body to the very bones:  
Bare foote I would on pilgrimage set forth  
Vnto the furthest quarters of the earth,  
And all my life time would I sackcloth weare,  
And mourning-wise powre dust vpon my head:  
So he but to forgiue me once would please,  
That his grey haires might go to heauen in peace.

And yet I know not how I him offended,  
Or wherein iustly I haue deserued blame.  
Oh sisters! you are much to blame in this,  
It was not he, but you that did me wrong.  
Yet God forgiue both him, and you and me,  
Euen as I doe in perfitt charity.

I will to Church, and pray vnto my Sauiour,  
That ere I dye, I may obtayne his fauour. *Exit.*

*Enter Leir and Perillus fayntly.*

*Per.* Rest on me, my Lord, and stay your selfe,  
The way feemes tedious to your aged lymmes.

1060

*Sc. xiii*

1070

1080

1090

*Sc. xiv*

## *The History of King Leir*

*Leir.* Nay, rest on me, kind friend, and stay thy selfe,  
Thou art as old as I, but more kind.

*Per.* Ah, good my Lord, it ill befits, that I  
1100 Should leane vpon the person of a King.

*Leir.* But it fits worfe, that I should bring thee forth,  
That had no cause to come along with me,  
Through these vncouth paths, and tirefull wayes,  
And never easfe thy faynting limmes a whit.  
Thou hast left all, I, all to come with me,  
And I, for all, have nougnt to guerdon thee.

*Per.* Cease, good my Lord, to aggrauate my woes,  
With these kind words, which cuts my heart in two,  
To think your will should want the power to do.

1110 *Leir.* Cease, good *Perillus*, for to call me Lord,  
And think me but the shaddow of my selfe.

*Per.* That honourable title will I giue,  
Vnto my Lord, so long as I do liue.  
Oh, be of comfort; for I see the place  
Whereas your daughter keeps her residence.  
And loe, in happy time the Cambrian Prince  
Is here arriu'd, to gratify our comming.

*Enter the Prince of Cambria, Ragan and Nobles: looke  
upon them, and whisper together.*

1120 *Leir.* Were I best speak, or fit me downe and dye?  
I am ashamed to tell this heauy tale.

*Per.* Then let me tell it, if you please, my Lord:  
Tis shame for them that were the cause thereof.

*Cam.* What two old men are those that seeme so sad?  
Me thinks, I should remember well their looks.

*Rag.* No, I mistake not, sure it is my father:  
I must dissemble kindnesse now of force.

*She runneth to him, and kneeleth downe, saying:*  
Father, I bid you welcome, full of griefe,  
1130 To see your Grace vsde thus vnworthily,  
And ill befitting for your reuerend age,  
To come on foot a iourney so indurable.  
Oh, what disaster chaunce hath bin the cause,  
To make your cheeks so hollow, spare and leane?

*and bis three daughters.*

He cannot speake for weeping : for Gods loue, come.  
Let vs refresh him with some needfull things,  
And at more leyisure we may better know,  
Whence springs the ground of this vnlookt for wo.

*Cam.* Come, father, e're we any further talke,  
You shall refresh you after this weary walk. *Excunt, manet* 1140

*Rag.* Comes he to me with finger in the eye, *Ragan.*  
To tell a tale against my sister here ?

Whom I do know, he greatly hath abusde :

And now like a contentious crafty wretch,  
He first begins for to complayne himselfe,  
When as himselfe is in the greatest fault.

Ile not be partiall in my sisters cause,  
Nor yet beleue his doting vayne reports :

Who for a trifle (safely) I dare say,

Vpon a spleene is stolen thence away :

And here (forsooth) he hopeth to haue harbour,

And to be moan'd and made on like a child :

But ere't be long, his comming he shall curse,

And truely say, he came from bad to worse :

Yet will I make fayre weather, to procure

Conuenient meanes, and then ile strike it sure. *Exit.*

*Enter Messenger solus.*

Sc. xv

*Mef.* Now happily I am arriuied here,  
Before the stately Palace of the Cambrian King :

If *Leir* be here safe-seated, and in rest,

To rowse him from it I will do my best. *Enter Ragan.*

Now bags of gold, your vertue is (no doubt)

To make me in my message bold and stout.

The King of heauen preserue your Maiesty.

And send your Hignesse euerlasting raigne.

*Ra.* Thanks, good my friend; but what imports thy message?

*Mef.* Kind greetings from the Cornwall Queene :  
The residue these letters will declare.

*Sbe opens the letters.*

*Rag.* How fares our royll sister ?

1170

*Mef.* I did leaue her at my parting, in good health.

*Sbe reads the letter, frownes and stamps.*

## *The History of King Leir*

See how her colour comes and goes agayne,  
Now red as scarlet, now as pale as ash :  
She how she knits her brow, and bytes her lips,  
And stamps, and makes a dumbe shew of disdayne,  
Mixt with reuenge, and violent extremes.

Here will be more worke and more crownes for me.

*Rag.* Alas, poore soule, and hath he vsde her thus ?

1180 And is he now come hither, with intent  
To set diuorce betwixt my Lord and me ?  
Doth he giue out, that he doth heare report,  
That I do rule my husband as I list,  
And therefore meanes to alter so the case,  
That I shall know my Lord to be my head ?  
Well, it were best for him to take good heed,  
Or I will make him hop without a head,  
For his presumption, dottard that he is.

1190 In Cornwall he hath made such mutinies,  
First, setting of the King against the Queene ;  
Then stirring vp the Commons 'gainst the King ;  
That had he there continued any longer,  
He had bin call'd in question for his fact.  
So vpon that occasion thence he fled,  
And comes thus flily stealing vnto vs :  
And now already since his comming hither,  
My Lord and he are growne in such a league,  
That I can haue no conference with his Grace :  
I feare, he doth already intimate

1200 Some forged cauillations 'gainst my state :  
Tis therefore best to cut him off in time,  
Lest flaunderous rumours once abroad disperst,  
It is too late for them to be reuerst.  
Friend, as the tennour of these letters shewes,  
My sister puts great confidence in thee.

*Mef.* She neuer yet committed trust to me,  
But that (I hope) she found me alwayes faythfull :  
So will I be to any friend of hers,  
That hath occasion to employ my helpe.

1210 *Rag.* Haft thou the heart to act a stratagem,

And

*and his three daughters.*

And giue a stabbe or two, if need require?

*Mef.* I haue a heart compact of Adamant,  
Which neuer knew what melting pitty meant.  
I weigh no more the murdring of a man,  
Then I respect the cracking of a Flea,  
When I doe catch her byting on my skin.  
If you will haue your husband or your father,  
Or both of them sent to another world,  
Do but commaund me doo't, it shall be done.

*Rag.* It is ynough, we make no doubt of thee: 1220  
Meet vs to morrow here, at nyne a clock:  
Meane while, farewell, and drink that for my sake. *Exit.*

*Mef.* I, this is it will make me do the deed:  
Oh, had I euyer day such customers,  
This were the gainefulst trade in Christendome!  
A purse of gold giu'n for a paltry stabbe!  
Why, heres a wench that longs to haue a stabbe.  
Wel, I could giue it her, and ne're hurt her neither.

*Enter the Gallian King, and Cordella.*

*Sc. xvi*

*King.* When will these clouds of sorrow once disperse,  
And smiling ioy tryumph vpon thy brow?  
When will this Scene of sadnesse haue an end,  
And pleasant acts infue, to moue delight?  
When will my louely Queene cease to lament,  
And take some comfort to her grieued thoughts?  
If of thy selfe thou daignst to haue no care,  
Yet pitty me, whom thy grieve makes despayre.

*Cor.* O, grieue not you, my Lord, you haue no cause;  
Let not my passions moue your mind a whit:  
For I am bound by nature, to lament  
For his ill will, that life to me first lent.  
If so the stocke be dryed with disdayne,  
Withered and sere the branch must needes remaine.

1240

*King.* But thou art now graft in another stock;  
I am the stock, and thou the louely branch:  
And from my root continuall sap shall flow,  
To make thee flourish with perpetuall spring.  
Forget thy father and thy kindred now,

## *The History of King Leir*

Since they forsake thee like inhumane beastes,  
1250 Thinke they are dead, since all their kindnesse dyes,  
And bury them, where black obliuion lyes.  
Think not thou art the daughter of old *Leir*,  
Who did vnkindly disinheret thee:  
But think thou art the noble Gallian Queene,  
And wife to him that dearely loueth thee:  
Embrace the ioyes that present with thee dwell,  
Let sorrow packe and hide her felse in hell.

*Cord.* Not that I misse my country or my kinne,  
My old acquaintance or my ancient friends,  
1260 Doth any whit distemperate my mynd,  
Knowing you, which are more deare to me,  
Then Country, kin, and all things els can be.  
Yet pardon me, my gracious Lord, in this:  
For what can stop the course of natures power? *✓*  
As easy is it for foure-footed beasts,  
To stay themselues vpon the liquid ayre,  
And mount aloft into the element,  
And ouerstrip the feathered Fowles in flight:  
As easy is it for the slimy Fish,  
1270 To liue and thriue without the helpe of water:  
As easy is it for the Blackamoore,  
To wash the tawny colour from his skin,  
Which all oppose against the course of nature,  
As I am able to forget my father.

*King.* Myrrour of vertue, Phoenix of our age!  
Too kind a daughter for an vnkind father,  
Be of good comfort; for I will dispatch  
Ambassadors immediately for Brittayne,  
Vnto the King of Cornwalls Court, whereas  
1280 Your father keepeth now his residence,  
And in the kindest maner him intreat,  
That setting former grieuances apart,  
He will be please to come and visit vs.  
If no intreaty will suffice the turne,  
Ile offer him the halfe of all my Crowne:  
If that moues not, weeke furnish out a Fleet,

And

and his three daughters.



And sayle to Cornwall for to visit him;  
And there you shall be firmely reconcilde  
In perfit loue, as earst you were before.

*Cor.* Where young cannot sufficient thanks afford,  
The King of heauen remunerate my Lord.

1290

*King.* Only be blithe, and frolick (sweet) with me:  
This and much more ile do to comfort thee.

*Enter Messenger solus.*

Sc. xvii

*Mef.* It is a world to see now I am flush,  
How many friends I purchase every where!  
How many seekes to creepe into my fauour,  
And kiffe their hands, and bend their knees to me!  
No more, here comes the Queene, now shall I know her mind,  
And hope for to deriue more crownes from her. *Enter Rag.* 1300

*Rag.* My friend, I see thou mind'st thy promise well,  
And art before me here, me thinks, to day.

*Mef.* I am a poore man, and it like your Grace;  
But yet I alwayes loue to keepe my word.

*Ra.* Wel, keepe thy word with me, & thou shalt see,  
That of a poore man I will make thee rich.

*Mef.* I long to heare it, it might haue bin dispatcht,  
If you had told me of it yesternight.

*Ra.* It is a thing of right strange consequence,  
And well I cannot vtter it in words. 1310

*Mef.* It is more strange, that I am not by this  
Beside my selfe, with longing for to heare it.  
Were it to meet the Deuill in his denne,  
And try a bout with him for a scratcht face,  
Ide vndertake it, if you would but bid me.

*Ra.* Ah, good my friend, that I should haue thee do,  
Is such a thing, as I do shame to speake;  
Yet it must needs be done.

*Mef.* Ile speak it for thee, Queene: shall I kill thy father?  
I know tis that, and if it be so, say. *Rag.* I. 1320

*Mef.* Why, that's ynough.

*Rag.* And yet that is not all.

*Mef.* What else?

*Rag.* Thou must kill that old man that came with him.

## *The History of King Leir*

*Mef.* Here are two hands, for eche of them is one.

*Rag.* And for eche hand here is a recompence.

*Give him two purses.*

*Mef.* Oh, that I had ten hands by myracle,  
I could teare ten in pieces with my teeth,  
1330 So in my mouth yould put a purse of gold.  
But in what maner must it be effected?

*Rag.* To morrow morning ere the breake of day,  
I by a wyle will send them to the thicket,  
That is about some two myles from the Court,  
And promise them to meet them there my selfe,  
Because I must haue priuate conference,  
About some newes I haue receyv'd from Cornwall.  
This is ynough, I know, they will not fayle,  
And then be ready for to play thy part:  
1340 Which done, thou mayst right easilly escape,  
And no man once mistrust thee for the fact:  
But yet, before thou prosecute the act,  
Shew him the letter, which my sister sent,  
There let him read his owne inditement first,  
And then proceed to execution:  
But see thou faynt not; for they will speake fayre.

*Mef.* Could he speak words as pleasing as the pipe  
Of *Mercury*, which charm'd the hundred eyes  
Of watchfull *Argus*, and inforc'd him sleepe:  
1350 Yet here are words so pleasing to my thoughts, *To the purse.*  
As quite shall take away the sound of his. *Exit.*

*Rag.* About it then, and when thou haft dispatcht,  
Ile find a meanes to send thee after him. *Exit.*

*Sc. xviii*

*Enter Cornwall and Gonorill.*

*Corn.* I wonder that the Messenger doth stay,  
Whom we dispatcht for Cambria so long since:  
If that his answere do not please vs well,  
And he do shew good reason for delay,  
Ile teach him how to dally with his King,  
1360 And to detayne vs in such long suspence.

*Gon.* My Lord, I thinke the reason may be this:  
My father meanes to come along with him;

And

*and his three daughters.*

And therefore tis his pleasure he shall stay,  
For to attend vpon him on the way.

*Corn.* It may be so, and therefore till I know  
The truth thereof, I will suspend my iudgement.

*Enter Servant.*

*Ser.* And't like your Grace, there is an Ambassador  
Arriuied from Gallia, and craues admittance to your Maiesty.

*Corn.* From Gallia? what should his message 1370  
Hither import? is not your father happely  
Gone thither? well, whatsoe're it be,  
Bid him come in, he shall haue audience.

*Enter Ambassador.*

What newes from Gallia? speake Ambassador.

*Am.* The noble King and Queene of Gallia first salutes,  
By me, their honourable father, my Lord *Leir*:  
Next, they commend them kindly to your Graces,  
As those whose welfare they intirely wish.  
Letters I haue to deliuer to my Lord *Leir*, 1380  
And presents too, if I might speake with him.

*Gon.* If you might speak with him? why, do you thinke,  
We are afrayd that you should speake with him?

*Am.* Pardon me, Madam; for I thinke not so,  
But say so only, 'cause he is not here.

*Corn.* Indeed, my friend, vpon some vrgent cause,  
He is at this time absent from the Court:  
But if a day or two you here repose,  
Tis very likely you shall haue him here,  
Or else haue certayne notice where he is. 1390

*Gon.* Are not we worthy to receiue your message?

*Am.* I had in charge to do it to himselfe.

*Gon.* It may be then 'twill not be done in haste. *to herselfe.*  
How doth my sister brooke the ayre of Fraunce?

*Am.* Exceeding well, and neuer sicke one houre,  
Since first she set her foot vpon the shone.

*Gon.* I am the more forry.

*Am.* I hope, not so, Madam.

*Gon.* Didst thou not say, that she was euer sicke,  
Since the first houre that she arriuied there? 1400

## *The History of King Leir*

*Amb.* No, Madam, I sayd quite contrary.

*Gon.* Then I mistooke thee.

*Corn.* Then she is merry, if she haue her health.

*Am.* Oh no, her griefe exceeds, vntill the time,  
That she be reconcil'd vnto her father.

*Gon.* God continue it.

*Am.* What, madam?

*Gon.* Why, her health.

*Am.* Amen to that: but God release her griefe,

1410 And send her father in a better mind,

Then to continue alwayes so vnkind.

*Corn.* Ile be a mediator in her cause,

And seeke all meanes to expiat his wrath.

*Am.* Madam, I hope your Grace will do the like.

*Gon.* Should I be a meane to exasperate his wrath  
Against my sister, whom I loue so deare? no, no.

*Am.* To expiate or mittigate his wrath:

For he hath misconceyued without a cause.

*Gon.* O, I, what else?

1420 *Am.* Tis pity it should be so, would it were otherwise.

*Gon.* It were great pity it should be otherwise.

*Am.* Then how, Madam?

*Gon.* Then that they should be reconcilde againe.

*Am.* It shewes you beare an honourable mind.

*Gon.* It shewes thy vnderstanding to be blind, *Speakes to  
ber selfe.*  
And that thou hadst need of an Interpreter:  
Well, I will know thy message ere't be long,  
And find a meane to crosse it, if I can.

1430 *Corn.* Come in, my friend, and frolick in our Court,  
Till certayne notice of my father come. *Exeunt.*

*Sc. xix* *Enter Leir and Perillus.*

*Per.* My Lord, you are vp to day before your houre,  
Tis newes to you to be abroad so rath.

*Leir.* Tis newes indeed, I am so extreme heauy,  
That I can scarcely keepe my eye-lids open.

*Per.* And so am I, but I impute the cause  
To rising sooner then we vse to do.

*Leir.* Hither my daughter meanes to come disgui'd:  
*Ile*

*and his three daughters.*

Ile sit me downe, and read vntill she come.

*Pull out a booke and sit downe.*

1440

*Per.* Sheele not be long, I warrant you, my Lord:  
But say, a couple of these they call good fellowes,  
Should step out of a hedge, and set vpon vs,  
We were in good case for to answere them.

*Leir.* Twere not for vs to stand vpon our hands.

*Per.* I feare, we scant should stand vpon our legs.  
But how should we do to defend our selues?

*Leir.* Euen pray to God, to blesse vs frō their hands:  
For feruent prayer much ill hap withstands.

*Per.* Ile sit and pray with you for company;      1450  
Yet was I ne're so heawy in my life.

*They fall both a sleepe.*

*Enter the Messenger or murtherer with two  
daggers in his hands.*

*Mess.* Were it not a madiest, if two or three of my professiō  
should meet me, and lay me downe in a ditch, and play robbe  
thiefe with me, & perforce take my gold away from me, whilst  
I act this stratagem, and by this meanes the gray beards should  
escape? Fayth, when I were at liberty againe, I would make no  
more to do, but go to the next tree, and there hang my selfe.      1460

*See them and start.*

But stay, me thinks, my youthes are here already,  
And with pure zeale haue prayed themselues a sleepe.  
I thinke, they know to what intent they came,  
And are prouided for another world.

*He takes their bookes away.*

Now could I stab them brauely, while they sleepe,  
And in a maner put them to no payne;  
And doing so, I shewed them mighty friendshipe:  
For feare of death is worse then death it selfe.      1470  
But that my sweet Queene will'd me for to shew  
This letter to them, ere I did the deed.  
Masse, they begin to stirre: ile stand aside;  
So shall I come vpon them vnawares.

*They wake and rise.*

*Leir.* I maruell, that my daughter stayes so long.

*F*      *Per. I*

## *The History of King Leir*

*Per.* I feare, we did mistake the place, my Lord.

*Leir.* God graunt we do not miscarry in the place :

I had a short nap, but so full of dread,

1480 As much amazeth me to think thereof.

*Per.* Feare not, my Lord, dreames are but fantasies,  
And flight imaginacions of the brayne.

*Mef.* Perswade him so ; but ile make him and you  
Confesse, that dreames do often proue too true.

*Per.* I pray, my Lord, what was the effect of it ?  
I may go neere to gesse what it pretends.

*Mef.* Leave that to me, I will expound the dreame.

*Leir.* Me thought, my daughters, *Gonorill & Ragan*,  
Stood both before me with such grim aspects,

1490 Eche brandishing a Faulchion in their hand,  
Ready to lop a lymme off where it fell,

And in their other hands a naked poynyard,  
Wherwith they stabd me in a hundred places,

And to their thinking left me there for dead :  
But then my youngelt daughter, fayre *Cordella*,

Came with a boxe of Balsome in her hand,  
And powred it into my bleeding wounds,

By whose good meanes I was recouered well,  
In perfitt health, as earst I was before :

1500 And with the feare of this I did awake,

And yet for feare my feeble ioynts do quake.

*Mef.* Ile make you quake for something prefently.

Stand, Stand.

*They reele.*

*Leir.* We do, my friend, although with much adoe.

*Mef.* Deliuer, deliuer.

*Per.* Deliuer vs, good Lord, from such as he.

*Mef.* You should haue prayed before, while it was time,  
And then perhaps, you might haue scapt my hands :

But you, like faithfull watch-men, fell asleepe,

1510 The whilst I came and tooke your Halberds from you.

*Sbew their Bookes.*

And now you want your weapons of defence,

How haue you any hope to be deliuered ?

This comes, because you haue no better stay,

But

*and bis tbree daughters.*

But fall asleepe, when you should watch and pray.

*Leir.* My friend, thou seemst to be a proper man.

*Mef.* Sblood, how the old slauue clawes me by the elbow ?  
He thinks, belike, to scape by scraping thus.

*Per.* And it may be, are in some need of money.

*Mef.* That to be false, behold my euidence.

1520

*Shewes his purses.*

*Leir.* If that I haue will do thee any good,  
I giue it thee, euen with a right good will. *Take it.*

*Per.* Here, take mine too, & wish with all my heart,  
To do thee pleasure, it were twice as much.

*Take his, and weygh them both in his bands.*

*Mef.* Ile none of them, they are too light for me.

*Puts them in his pocket.*

*Leir.* Why then farewell : and if thou haue occasion  
In any thing, to vse me to the Queene,

1530

'Tis like ynough that I can pleasure thee.

*They proffer to goe.*

*Mef.* Do you heare, do you heare, sir ?  
If I had occasion to vse you to the Queene,

Would you do one thing for me I should aske ?

*Leir.* I, any thing that lyes within my power.  
Here is my hand vpon it, so farewell. *Proffer to goe.*

*Mef.* Heare you sir, heare you ? pray, a word with you.  
Me thinks, a comely honest ancient man

Should not dissemble with one for a vantage.

1540

I know, when I shall come to try this geare,  
You will recant from all that you haue sayd.

*Per.* Mistrust not him, but try him when thou wilt :  
He is her father, therefore may do much.

*Mef.* I know he is, and therefore meane to try him :  
You are his friend too, I must try you both.

*Ambo.* Prithy do, prithy do. *Proffer to go out.*

*Mef.* Stay gray-beards then, and proue men of your words :  
The Queene hath tyed me by a solemne othe,

Here in this place to see you both dispatcht:

1550

Now for the safegard of my conscience,  
Do me the pleasure for to kill your felues :

F 2

So

## *The History of King Leir*

So shall you saue me labour for to do it,  
And proue your selues true old men of your words.  
And here I vow in sight of all the world,  
I ne're will trouble you whilst I liue agayne.

*Leir.* Affright vs not with terroure, good my friend,  
Nor strike such feare into our aged hearts.  
Play not the Cat, which dallieth with the mouse;

1560 And on a sudden maketh her a pray :  
But if thou art markt for the man of death  
To me and to my *Damion*, tell me playne,  
That we may be prepared for the stroke,  
And make our selues fit for the world to come.

*Mef.* I am the last of any mortall race,  
That ere your eyes are likely to behold,  
And hither sent of purpose to this place,  
To giue a finall period to your dayes,  
Which are so wicked, and haue liued so long,

1570 That your owne children seeke to short your life.

*Leir.* Camst thou from France, of purpose to do this ?

*Mef.* From France? zoones, do I looke like a Frenchman?  
Sure I haue not mine owne face on ; some body hath chang'd  
faces with me, and I know not of it: But I am sure, my apparell  
is all English. Sirra, what meanest thou to aske that question ?  
I could spoyle the fashion of this face for anger. A French face!

*Leir.* Because my daughter, whom I haue offended,  
And at whose hands I haue deseru'd as ill,  
As euer any father did of child,

1580 Is Queene of Fraunce, no thanks at all to me,  
But vnto God, who my iniustice see.

If it be so, that shee doth seeke reuenge,  
As with good reason she may iustly do,  
I will most willingly resigne my life,  
A sacrifice to mittigate her ire :

I neuer will intreat thee to forgiue,  
Because I am vnworthy for to liue.

Therefore speake soone, & I will soone make speed :  
Whether *Cordella* will'd thee do this deed ?

1590 *Mef.* As I am a perfitt gentleman, thou speakest French to me:  
I neuer

*and his three daughters.*

I never heard *Condellaes* name before,  
Nor never was in Fraunce in all my life :  
I never knew thou hadst a daughter there,  
To whom thou didst proue so vnkind a churle :  
But thy owne young declares that thou haft bin  
A vyle old wretch, and full of heynous sin.

*Leir.* Ah no, my friend, thou art deceyued much :  
For her except, whom I confess I wrongd,  
Through doting frenzy, and o're-ielous loue.  
There liues not any vnder heauens bright eye,  
That can conuict me of impiety.  
And therfore sure thou dost mistake the marke :  
For I am in true peace with all the world.

1600

*Mef.* You are the fitter for the King of heauen :  
And therefore, for to rid thee of suspence,  
Know thou, the Queenes of Cambria and Cornwall,  
Thy owne two daughters, *Gonorill* and *Ragan*,  
Appoyneted me to massacre thee here.  
Why wouldst thou then perswade me, that thou art  
In charity with all the world ? but now  
When thy owne issue hold thee in such hate,  
That they haue hyred me t'abbridge thy fate,  
Oh, fy vpon such vyle dissembling breath,  
That would deceyue, euen at the poynt of death.

1610

*Per.* Am I awake, or is it but a dreame ?  
*Mef.* Feare nothing, man, thou art but in a dreame,  
And thou shalt never wake vntill doomes day,  
By then, I hope, thou wilt haue slept ynough.

*Leir.* Yet, gentle friend, graunt one thing ere I die.  
*Mef.* Ile graunt you any thing, except your liues.  
*Leir.* Oh, but affuse me by some certayne token,  
That my two daughters hyred thee to this deed :  
If I were once reholud of that, then I  
Would wish no longer life, but crane to dye.

1620

*Mef.* That to be true, in sight of heauen I sweare.  
*Leir.* Sweare not by heauen, for feare of punishmēt :  
The heauens are guiltlesse of such haynous acts.

*Mef.* I sweare by earth, the mother of vs all.



## *The History of King Leir*

*Leir.* Sweare not by earth; for she abhors to beare

1630 Such bastards, as are murtherers of her sonnes.

*Mef.* Why then, by hell, and all the deuils I sweare.

*Leir.* Sweare not by hell; for that stands gaping wide,  
To swallow thee, and if thou do this deed.

### *Thunder and lightning.*

*Mef.* I would that word were in his belly agayne,  
It hath frighted me even to the very heart:

This old man is some strong Magician:  
His words haue turned my mind from this exployt.  
Then neyther heauen, earth, nor hell be witnesse;

1640 But let this paper witnesse for them all.

### *Shewes Gonorils letter.*

Shall I relent, or shall I prosecute?

Shall I resolute, or were I best recant?

I will not crack my credit with two Queenes,  
To whom I haue already past my word.

Oh, but my conscience for this act doth tell,  
I get heauens hate, earths scorne, and paynes of hell.

### *They blesse themselues.*

*Per.* Oh iust *Ieboua*, whose almighty power

1650 Doth gouerne all things in this spacious world,  
How canst thou suffer such outragious acts  
To be committed without iust reuenge?

O viperous generation and accurst,  
To seeke his blood, whose blood did make them first!

*Leir.* Ah, my true friend in all extremity,

Let vs submit vs to the will of God:

Things past all fence, let vs not seeke to know;  
It is Gods will, and therefore must be so.

My friend, I am prepared for the stroke:

1660 Strike when thou wilst, and I forgiue thee here,  
Euen from the very bottome of my heart.

*Mef.* But I am not prepared for to strike.

*Leir.* Farewell, *Perillus*, euen the truest friend,  
That euer liued in aduersity:

The latest kindnesse ile request of thee,  
Is that thou go vnto my daughter *Coradella*,

And

*and his three daughters.*

And carry her her fathers latest blessing:  
Withall desire her, that she will forgiue me;  
For I haue wrongd her without any cause.  
Now, Lord, receyue me, for I come to thee,  
And dye, I hope, in perfitt charity.  
Dispatch, I pray thee, I haue liued too long.

1670

*Mef.* I, but you are vnwise, to send an errand  
By him that neuer meaneth to deliuer it:  
Why, he must go along with you to heauen:  
It were not good you shoulde go all alone.

*Leir.* No doubt, he shal, when by the course of nature,  
He must surrendre vp his due to death:  
But that time shall not come, till God permit.

*Mef.* Nay, presently, to beare you company. 1680  
I haue a Pasport for him in my pocket,  
Already seald, and he must needs ride Poste.

*Shew a bagge of money.*

*Leir.* The letter which I read, imports not so,  
It only toucheth me, no word of him.

*Meff.* I, but the Queene commaunds it must be so,  
And I am payd for him, as well as you.

*Per.* I, who haue borne you company in life,  
Most willingly will beare a share in death.  
It skilleth not for me, my friend, a whit,  
Nor for a hundred such as thou and I. 1690

*Mef.* Mary, but it doth, sir, by your leauue; your good dayes  
are past: though it bee no matter for you, tis a matter for me,  
proper men are not so rife.

*Per.* Oh, but beware, how thou doft lay thy hand  
Vpon the high anoynted of the Lord:  
O, be aduised ere thou doft begin:  
Dispatch me straight, but meddle not with him.

*Leir.* Friend, thy commission is to deale with me,  
And I am he that hath deserued all: 1700  
The plot was layd to take away my life:  
And here it is, I do intreat thee take it:  
Yet for my sake, and as thou art a man,  
Spare this my friend, that hither with me came:

## *The History of King Leir*

I brought him forth, whereas he had not bin,  
But for good will to beare me company.

He left his friends, his country and his goods,  
And came with me in most extremity.

Oh, if he should miscarry here and dye,

1710 Who is the cause of it, but only I ?

*Mef.* Why that am I, let that ne're trouble thee.

*Leir.* O no, tis I. O, had I now to give thee

The monarchy of all the spacious world

To sauе his life, I would bestow it on thee :

But I haue nothing but these teares and prayers,

And the submision of a bended knee. *kneele.*

O, if all this to mercy moue thy mind,

Spare him, in heauen thou shalt like mercy find.

1720 *Mef.* I am as hard to be moued as another, and yet  
me thinks the strength of their perswasions stirres me  
a little.

*Per.* My friend, if feare of the almighty power

Haue power to moue thee, we haue sayd ynough :

But if thy mind be moueable with gold,

We haue not presently to give it thee :

Yet to thy selfe thou mayſt do greater good,

To keepe thy hands still vndefilde from blood :

For do but well consider with thy selfe,

When thou haſt finiſht this outragious act,

1730 What horroure ſtill will haunt thee for the deed :

Think this agayne, that they which would incenſe

Thee for to be the Butcher of their father,

When it is done, for feare it ſhould be knowne,

Would make a meanes to rid thee from the world :

Oh, then art thou for euer tyed in chaynes

Of euerlaſting torments to indure,

Euen in the hotest hole of grify hell,

Such paynes, as neuer mortall young can tell.

1740 *It thunders. He quakes, and lets fall the Dagger  
next to Perillus.*

*Leir.* O, heauens be thanked, he wil ſpare my friend.  
Now when thou wilt come make an end of me.

*He*

*and bis tbree daughters.*

*He lets fall the other dagger.*

*Per.* Oh, happy sight ! he meanes to fane my Lord.  
The King of heauen continue this good mind.

*Leir.* Why stayst thou to do execution ?

*Mef.* I am as wilfull as you for your life :  
I will not do it, now you do intreat me.

*Per.* Ah, now I see thou hast some sparke of grace.

*Mef.* Beshrew you for it, you haue put it in me : 1750  
The parlorefest old men, that ere I heard.

Well, to be flat, ile not meddle with you :

Here I found you, and here ile leaue you :

If any aske you why the case so stands ?

Say that your tounys were better then your hands. *Exit.*

*Per.* Farewell. If euer we together meet, *Meff.*  
It shall go hard, but I will thee regreet.

Courage, my Lord, the worst is ouerpast ;  
Let vs give thanks to God, and hye vs hence.

*Leir.* Thou art deceyued ; for I am past the best, 1760  
And know not whither for to go from hence :  
Death had bin better welcome vnto me,

Then longer life to adde more misery.

*Per.* It were not good to returne from whence we  
Vnto your daughter *Ragan* back againe. (came,  
Now let vs go to France, vnto *Cordella*,  
Your youngest daughter, doubtlesse she will succour you.

*Leir.* Oh, how can I perswade my selfe of that,  
Since the other two are quite deuoyd of loue ; 1770  
To whom I was so kind, as that my gifts,  
Might make them loue me, if 'twere nothing else ?

*Per.* No worldly gifts, but grace from God on hye,  
Doth nourish vertue and true charity.  
Remember well what words *Cordella* spake,  
What time you askt her, how she lou'd your Grace.  
Se sayd, her loue vnto you was as much,  
As ought a child to beare vnto her father.

*Leir.* But she did find, my loue was not to her,  
As should a father beare vnto a child.

*Per.* That makes not her loue to be any leffe, 1780  
G If

## *The History of King Leir*

If she do loue you as a child should do:  
You haue tryed two, try one more for my sake,  
Ile ne're intreat you further tryall make.  
Remember well the dream you had of late,  
And thinke what comfort it foretels to vs.

*Leir.* Come, truest friend, that euer man possest,  
I know thou counsailst all things for the best:  
If this third daughter play a kinder part,  
It comes of God, and not of my desert. *Exeunt.*

*Sc. xx Enter the Gallian Ambassador solus.*

1791 *Am.* There is of late newes come vnto the Court,  
That old Lord *Leir* remaynes in Cambria:  
Ile hye me thither preſently, to impart  
My letters and my meſſage vnto him.

I neuer was leſſe welcome to a place  
In all my life time, then I haue bin hither,  
Eſpecially vnto the ſtately *Queene*,  
Who would not caſt one gracious looke on me,  
But ſtill with lowring and ſuspicioſe eyes,  
1800 Would take exceptions at each word I ſpake,  
And fayne ſhe would haue vndermined me,  
To know what my Ambaſſage did import:  
But ſhe is like to hop without her hope,  
And in this matter for to want her will,  
Though (by report) ſheele haūt in all things elſe.  
Well, I will poſte away for Cambria:

Within theſe few dayes I hope to be there, *Exit.*

*Sc. xxi Enter the King and Queene of Gallia, & Mumford.*

*King.* By this, our father vnderſtands our mind,  
1810 And our kind greetings ſent to him of late:  
Therefore my mind prefageth ere't be long,  
We ſhall receyue from Brittayne happy newes.

*Cord.* I feare, my ſister will diſſwade his mind;  
For ſhe to me hath alwayes bin vnkind.

✓ *King.* Feare not, my loue, ſince that we know the worſt,  
✓ The laſt meaneſſe helpes, if that we miſſe the first:  
If hee'le not come to Gallia vnto vs,  
Then we will ſayle to Brittayne vnto him.

*Mum.* Well,

*and his threes daughters.*

*Mum.* Well, if I once see Brittayne agayne,  
I haue sworne, ile ne're come home without my wench,      1820  
And ile not be forsworne,  
Ile rather neuer come home while I liue.

*Cor.* Are you sure, *Mumford*, she is a mayd still?

*Mum.* Nay, ile not sweare she is a mayd, but she goes for one:  
Ile take her at all aduentures, if I can get her.

*Cord.* I, that's well put in.

*Mum.* Well put in? nay, it was ill put in; for had it  
Bin as well put in, as ere I put in, in my dayes,  
I would haue made her follow me to Fraunce.

*Cor.* Nay, you'd haue bin so kind, as take her with you,      1830  
Or else, were I as she,  
I would haue bin so louing, as ide stay behind you:  
Yet I must confess, you are a very proper man,  
And able to make a wench do more then she would do.

*Mum.* Well, I haue a payre of slops for the nonce,  
Will hold all your mocks.

*King.* Nay, we see you haue a hansom hose.

*Cor.* I, and of the newest fashion.

*Mum.* More bobs, more: put them in still,  
They'l serue instead of bumbault, yet put not in too many,      1840  
lest the seames crack, and they fly out amongst you againe:  
you must not think to outface me so easly in my misbris quarrel,  
who if I see once agayne, ten teame of horses shall  
not draw me away, till I haue full and whole possesyon.

*King.* I, but one teame and a cart will serue the turne.

*Cor.* Not only for him, but also for his wench.

*Mum.* Well, you are two to one, ile give you ouer:  
And since I see you so pleasantly disposed,  
Which indeed is but seldome seene, ile clayme  
A promise of you, which you shall not deny me:      1850  
For promise is debt, & by this hand you promisid it me.  
Therefore you owe it me, and you shall pay it me,  
Or ile sue you vpon an action of vnkindnesse.

*King.* Prithy, Lord *Mumford*, what promise did I make thee?

*Mum.* Fayth, nothing but this,  
That the next fayre weather, which is very now,

# *The History of King Leir*

You would go in progreffe downe to the sea fide,  
Which is very neere.

*King.* Fayth, in this motion I will ioyne with thee,  
1860 And be a mediator to my Queene.

Prithy, my Loue, let this match go forward,  
My mind foretels, 'twill be a lucky voyage.

*Cor.* Entreaty needs not, where you may cōmaund,  
So you be pleaseſe, I am right well content :  
Yet, as the Sea I much desire to ſee ;  
So am I, moſt vnvilling to be ſeenē.

*King.* Weele go diſguifed, all vnkowne to any.

*Cor.* Howſoever you make one, ile make another.

*Mum.* And I the third : oh, I am ouer-joyed !

1870 See what loue is, which getteth with a word,  
What all the world beſides could ne're obtayne !  
But what diſguifes ſhall we haue, my Lord ?

*King.* Fayth thus : my Queene & I wil be diſguifde,  
Like a playne country couple, and you ſhall be *Roger*  
Our man, and wayt vpon vs : or if you will,  
You ſhall go firſt, and we will wayt on you.

*Mum.* Twere more then time ; this deuice is excellent.  
Come let vs about it. *Exeunt.*

Sc. xxii *Enter Cambria and Ragan, with Nobles.*

1880 *Cam.* What ſtrange miſchance or vnxpected hap  
Hath thus depriu'd vs of our fathers preſence ?  
Can no man tell vs what's become of him,  
With whom we did conuerſe not two dayes ſince ?  
My Lords, let euery where light-horſe be ſent,  
To ſcoure about through all our Regiment,  
Diſpatch a Poſte immeadiately to Cornwall,  
To ſee if any newes be of him there ;  
My ſelue will make a ſtrickt inquiry here,  
And all about our Cities neere at hand,  
1890 Till certayne newes of his abode be brought.

*Rag.* All ſorrow is but counterfeſet to mine,  
Whofe lips are almoſt ſealed vp with grieſe :  
Mine is the ſubſtance, whiſt they do but ſeeme  
To weepe the leſſe, which teares cannot redeeme.

*and his three daughters.*

O, ne're was heard so strange a misaduerture,  
A thing so far beyond the reach of fence,  
Since no mans reason in the cause can enter.  
What hath remou'd my father thus from hence?

O, I do feare some charme or inuocation  
Of wicked spirits, or infernall fiends,  
Stird by *Cordella*, moues this innouation,  
And brings my father timelesse to his end.  
But might I know, that the detested Witch  
Were certayne cause of this vncertayne ill,  
My selfe to Fraunce would go in some disguise,  
And with these nayles scratch out her hatefull ey  
For since I am deprived of my father,  
I loath my life, and wish my death the rather.

*Cam.* The heauens are iust, and hate impiety,  
And will (no doubt) reueale such haynous crimes:  
Censure not any, till you know the right:  
Let him be Judge, that bringeth truth to light.

*Ra.* O, but my griefe, like to a swelinge tyde,  
Exceeds the bounds of common patience:  
Nor can I moderate my toung so much,  
To conceale them, whom I hold in suspect.

*Cam.* This matter shall be sifted: if it be she,  
A thousand Fraunces shall not harbour her.

## *Enter the Gallian Ambassador.*

*Am. All happiness vnto the Cambrian King.*

**Cam.** Welcom, my friend, from whence is thy Ambaflage?

*Am. I came from Gallia, vnto Cornwall sent,  
With letters to your honourable father,  
Whom there not finding, as I did expect,  
I was directed hither to repayre.*

*Rag.* Frenchman, what is thy message to my father?

*Am.* My letters, Madam, will import the same,  
Which my Commission is for to deliuer.

**Ra.** In his absence you may trust us with your letters.

*Am.* I must performe my charge in such a maner,  
As I haue strict commaundement from the King.

*Ra.* There is good packing twixt your King and you:

## *The History of King Leir*

You need not hither come to aske for him,  
You know where he is better then our selues.

*Am.* Madam, I hope, not far off.

*Ra.* Hath the young murdressle, your outragious Queene,  
No meanes to colour her detested deeds,  
In finishing my guiltlesse fathers dayes,  
(Because he gaue her nothing to her dowre)

1940 But by the colour of a fayn'd Ambassage,  
To send him letters hither to our Court?  
Go carry them to them that sent them hither,  
And bid them keepe their scroules vnto themselues:  
They cannot blind vs with such flight excuse,  
To smother vp so monstrous vild abuse.  
And were it not, it is 'gainst law of Armes,  
To offer violence to a Messenger,  
We would inflict such torments on thy selfe,  
As should inforce thee to reueale the truth.

1950 *Am.* Madam, your threats no whit apall my mind,  
I know my conscience guiltlesse of this act;  
My King and Queene, I dare be sworne, are free  
From any thought of such impiety:  
And therefore, Madam, you haue done them wrong,  
And ill beseeming with a sisters loue,  
Who in meere duty tender him as much,  
As euer you respected him for dowre.  
The King your husband will not say as much.

*Cam.* I will suspend my iudgement for a time,  
1960 Till more appearance give vs further light:  
Yet to be playne, your comming doth inforce  
A great suspicion to our do ubtful mind,  
And that you do resemble, to be briefe,  
Him that first robs, and then cries, Stop the theefe.

*Am.* Pray God some neere you haue not done the like.

*Rag.* Hence, saucy mate, reply no more to vs; *She strikes*  
For law of Armes shall not protect thy young. *him.*

*Am.* Ne're was I offred such discourtesy;  
God and my King, I trust, ere it be long,  
1970 Will find a meane to remedy this wrong, *Exit Amb.*

*Rag.* How

*and his three daughters.*

*Rag.* How shall I liue, to suffer this disgrace,  
At euery base and vulgar peasants hands?  
It ill befitteh my imperiall state,  
To be thus vsde, and no man take my part. *Shee weeps.*

*Cam.* What should I do? infringe the law of Armes,  
Were to my euerlasting obloquy:  
But I will take reuenge vpon his master,  
Which sent him hither, to delude vs thus.

*Rag.* Nay, if you put vp this, be sure, ere long,  
Now that my father thus is made away,  
Sheele come & clayme a third part of your Crowne,  
As due vnto her by inheritance.

*Cam.* But I will proue her title to be nought  
But shame, and the reward of Parricide,  
And make her an example to the world,  
For after-ages to admire her penance.  
This will I do, as I am Cambriaes King,  
Or lose my life, to prosecute reuenge.

Come, first let's learne what newes is of our father,  
And then proceed, as best occasion fits. *Exeunt.*

*Enter Leir, Perillus, and two Marriners, in sea-  
gownes and sea-caps.*

*Per.* My honest friends, we are ashamed to shew  
The great extremity of our present state,  
In that at this time we are brought so low,  
That we want money for to pay our passage.  
The truth is so, we met with some good fellowes,  
A little before we came aboord your ship,  
Which stript vs quite of all the coyne we had,  
And left vs not a penny in our purses:  
Yet wanting mony, we will vse the meane,  
To see you satisfied to the vttermost. *Looke on Leir.*

1. *Mar.* Heres a good gown, 'twould become me passing wel,  
I should be fine in it. *Looke on Perillus.*

2. *Mar.* Heres a good cloke, I maruel how I should look in it.

*Leir.* Fayth, had we others to supply their roome,  
Though ne'er so meane, you willingly shoule haue them.

1. *Mar.* Do you heare, sir? you looke like an honest man;

1980

1990

Sc. xxiii

2000

## *The History of King Leir*

Ille not stand to do you a pleasure: here's a good strōg motly ga-  
2010 berdine, cost me xiiij. good shillings at Billingsgate, giue me your  
gowne for it, & your cap for mine, & ile forgiue your passage.

*Leir.* With al my heart, and xx. thanks. *Leir & be changed.*

2. *Mar.* Doyouheare, sir? you shal haue a better match thē he,  
because you are my friend: here is a good sheeps russet sea-  
gowne, wil bide more stresse, I warrant you, then two of his, yet  
for you seem to be an honest gentleman, I am content to chāge  
it for your cloke, and aske you nothing for your passage more.

*Pull off Perillus cloke.*

*Per.* My owne I willingly would change with thee,  
2020 And think my selfe indebted to thy kindnesse:

But would my friend might keepe his garment still.  
My friend, ile giue thee this new dublet, if thou wilt  
Restore his gowne vnto him back agayne.

1. *Mar.* Nay, if I do, would I might ne're eate powderd beefe  
and mustard more, nor drink Can of good liquor whilſt I liue.  
My friend, you haue ſmall reaſon to ſeeke to hinder me of my  
bargaine: but the beſt is, a bargayne's a bargayne.

*Leir.* Kind friend, it is much better as it is; *Leir to Perillus.*  
For by this meanes we may escape vnowne,  
2030 Till time and opportunity do fit.

2. *Mar.* Hark, hark, they are laying their heads together,  
Theile repent them of their bargayne anon,  
'Twere beſt for vs to go while we are well.

1. *Mar.* God be with you, sir, for your passage back agayne,  
Ille vſe you as vnaſonable as another.

*Leir.* I know thou wilt; but we hope to bring ready money  
With vs, when we come back agayne. *Excuse Mariners.*  
Were euer men in this extremity,  
In a ſtrange country, and deuoyd of friends,  
2040 And not a penny for to helpe our ſelues?

Kind friend, what thinkſt thou will become of vs?

*Per.* Be of good cheere, my Lord, I haue a dublet,  
Will yeeld vs mony ynough to ſerue our turnes,  
Vntill we come vnto your daughters Court:  
And then, I hope, we ſhall find friends ynough.

*Leir.* Ah, kind *Perillus*, that is it I feare,

And

*and his three daughters.*

And makes me faynt, or euer I come there.  
Can kindnesse spring out of ingratitude?  
Or loue be reapt, where hatred hath bin fowne?  
Can Henbane ioyne in league with Methridate?  
Or Sugar grow in Wormwoods bitter stalke?  
It cannot be, they are too opposite:  
And so am I to any kindnesse here.

2050

I haue throwne Wormwood on the sugred youth,  
And like to Henbane poysoned the Fount,  
Whence flowed the Methridate of a childs goodwil:  
I, like an envious thorne, haue prickt the heart,  
And turnd sweet Grapes, to sowre vnreliſht Sloes:  
The cauſeſeſſe ire of my respectleſſe breft,  
Hath fowrd the ſweet milk of dame Natures paps:  
My bitter words haue gauld her hony thoughts,  
And weeds of rancour chokt the flower of grace.  
Then what remainder is of any hope,  
But all our fortunes will go quite aſſlope?

2060

*Per.* Feare not, my Lord, the perfit good indeed,  
Can neuer be corrupted by the bad:  
A new fresh vefſell ſtill retaynes the taste  
Of that which firſt is powr'd into the ſame:  
And therfore, though you name yourſelue the thorn,  
The weed, the gall, the henbane & the wormewood;  
Yet ſheele continue in her former ſtate,  
The hony, milke, Grape, Sugar, Methridate.

2070

*Leir.* Thou pleaſing Orator vnto me in wo,  
Ceafe to beguile me with thy hopefull ſpeaches:  
O ioyne with me, and thinke of nougħt but croſſes,  
And then weeke one lament anotherſ loſſes.

*Per.* Why, ſay the worſt, the worſt can be but death,  
And death is better then for to deſpair:  
Then hazzard death, which may conuert to life;  
Banish deſpair, which brings a thouſand deathes.

2080

*Leir.* O recome with thy ſtrong arguments, I yeeld,  
To be directed by thee, as thou wilt:  
As thou yeeldſt comfort to my crazed thoughts,  
Would I could yeeld the like vnto thy body,  
Which is full weake, I know, and ill apayd,

H

For

## *The History of King Leir*

For want of fresh meat and due sustenance.

*Per.* Alack, my Lord, my heart doth bleed, to think  
That you should be in such extremity.

*Leir.* Come, let vs go, and see what God will send;  
2090 When all meanes faile, he is the surest friend. *Exeunt.*  
*Sc. xiv* *Enter the Gallian King and Queene, and Mumford, with a  
basket, disguised like Country folke.*

*King.* This tedious iourney all on foot, sweet Loue,  
Cannot be pleasing to your tender ioynts,  
Which ne're were vsed to these toylesome walks.

*Cord.* I neuer in my life tooke more delight  
In any iourney, then I do in this:  
It did me good, when as we hapt to light  
Amongst the merry crue of country folke,  
2100 To see what industry and paynes they tooke,  
To win them commendations 'mongst their friends.  
Lord, how they labour to bestir themselues,  
And in their quirks to go beyond the Moone,  
And so take on them with such antike fits,  
That one would think they were beside their wits!  
Come away, *Roger*, with your basket.

*Mum.* Soft, Dame, here comes a couple of old youthes,  
I must needs make my selfe fat with iesting at them.

*Cor.* Nay, prithy do not, they do seeme to be *Enter Leir*  
2110 Men much o'regone with grieve and misery. *& Perillus*  
Let's stand aside, and harken what they say. *very faintly.*

*Leir.* Ah, my *Perillus*, now I see we both  
Shall end our dayes in this vnfruitfull foyle.  
Oh, I do faint for want of sustenance:  
And thou, I know, in little better case.  
No gentle tree affords one taife of fruit,  
To comfort vs, vntill we meet with men:  
No lucky path conducts our lucklesse steps  
Vnto a place where any comfort dwels.  
2120 Sweet rest betyde vnto our happy soules;  
For here I see our bodies must haue end.

*Per.* Ah, my deare Lord, how doth my heart lament,  
To see you brought to this extremity!  
O, if you loue me, as you do profess,

Or

*and his three daughters.*

Or euer thought well of me in my life, *He strips up his arme.*  
Feed on this flesh, whose veynes are not so dry,  
But there is vertue left to comfort you.  
O, feed on this, if this will do you good,  
Ile smile for ioy, to see you suck my bloud.

*Leir.* I am no Caniball, that I should delight  
To slake my hungry iawes with humane flesh:  
I am no deuill, or ten times worse then so,  
To suck the bloud of such a peereleffe friend.  
O, do not think that I respect my life  
So dearely, as I do thy loyall loue.  
Ah, Brittayne, I shall neuer see thee more,  
That hast vnkindly banished thy King:  
And yet not thou dost make me to complayne,  
But they which were more neere to me then thou.

2130

*Cor.* What do I heare? this lamentable voyce,  
Me thinks, ere now I oftentimes haue heard.

2140

*Leir.* Ah, *Gonorill*, was halfe my Kingdomes gift  
The cause that thou didſt ſeeke to haue my life?  
Ah, cruell *Ragan*, did I giue thee all,  
And all could not ſuffice without my bloud?  
Ah, poore *Cordella*, did I giue thee nought,  
Nor neuer ſhall be able for to giue?  
O, let me warne all ages that inſueth,  
How they truſt flattery, and reiect the trueth.  
Well, vnkind Girles, I here forgiue you both,  
Yet the iuft heauens will hardly do the like;  
And only craue forgiuenefſe at the end  
Of good *Cordella*, and of thee, my friend;  
Of God, whose Maieſty I haue offendēd,  
By my transgrefſion many thouſand wayes:  
Of her, deare heart, whom I for no occaſion  
Turn'd out of all, through flatterers perfwafion:  
Of thee, kind friend, who but for me, I know,  
Hadſt neuer come vnto this place of wo.

2150

*Cor.* Alack, that euer I ſhould liue to ſee  
My noble father in this misery.

2160

*King.* Sweet Loue, reueale not what thou art as yet,  
Vntill we know the ground of all this ill.

## *The History of King Leir*

*Cor.* O, but some meat, some meat: do you not see,  
How neere they are to death for want of food?

*Per.* Lord, which didst help thy seruants at their need,  
Or now or neuer send vs helpe with speed.

Oh comfort, comfort! yonder is a banquet,  
And men and women, my Lord: be of good cheare;

2170 For I see comfort comming very neere.

O my Lord, a banquet, and men and women!

*Leir.* O, let kind pity mollify their hearts,  
That they may helpe vs in our great extreames.

*Per.* God sauе you, friends; & if this blessed banquet  
Affordeth any food or sustenance,

Euen for his sake that saued vs all from death,

Vouchsafe to sauе vs from the gripe of famine. *She bringeth*

*Cor.* Here father, sit and eat, here, sit & drink: *bim to the table*  
And would it were far better for your sakes.

2180 *Perillus takes Leir by the hand to the table.*

*Per.* Ile give you thanks anon: my friend doth faynt,  
And needeth present comfort. *Leir drinks.*

*Mum.* I warrant, he ne're stayes to say grace:  
O, theres no sauce to a good stomake.

*Per.* The blessed God of heauen hath thought vpon vs.

*Leir.* The thanks be his, and these kind courteous folke,  
By whose humanity we are preserued. *They eat hungerly, Leir*

*Cor.* And may that draught be vnto him, as was *drinkes.*  
That which old *Eson* dranke, which did renue

2190 His withered age, and made him young againe.

And may that meat be vnto him, as was  
That which *Elias* ate, in strength whereof  
He walked fourty dayes, and neuer faynted.  
Shall I conceale me longer from my father?  
Or shall I manifest my selfe to him?

*King.* Forbeare a while, vntill his strength returne,  
Lest being ouer ioyed with seeing thee,  
His poore weake fences should forsake their office,  
And so our cause of ioy be turnd to sorrow.

2200 *Per.* What chere, my Lord? how do you feele your selfe?

*Leir.* Me thinks, I neuer ate such fauory meat:  
It is as pleasant as the blessed Manna,

That

*and his three daughters.*

That raynd from heauen amongst the Israelites:  
It hath recall'd my spirits home agayne,  
And made me fresh, as earst I was before.  
But how shall we congratulate their kindnesse?

*Per.* Infayth, I know not how sufficiently;  
But the best meane that I can think on, is this:  
Ile offer them my dublet in requitall;  
For we haue nothing else to spare.

2210

*Leir.* Nay, stay, *Perillus*, for they shall haue mine.

*Per.* Pardon, my Lord, I sweare they shall haue mine.

*Perillus proffers his dublet: they will not take it.*

*Leir.* Ah, who would think such kindnes should remayne  
Among such strange and vnacquainted men:  
And that such hate should harbour in the brest  
Of those, which haue occasion to be best?

*Cor.* Ah, good old father, tell to me thy griefe,  
Ile sorrow with thee, if not adde reliefe.

*Leir.* Ah, good young daughter, I may call thee so;  
For thou art like a daughter I did owe.

2220

*Cor.* Do you not owe her still? what, is she dead?

*Leir.* No, God forbid: but all my interest's gone,  
By shewing my selfe too much vnnaturall:  
So haue I lost the title of a father,  
And may be call'd a stranger to her rather.

*Cor.* Your title's good still; for tis always knowne,  
A man may do as him list with his owne.  
But haue you but one daughter then in all?

*Leir.* Yes, I haue more by two, then would I had.

2230

*Cor.* O, say not so, but rather see the end:  
They that are bad, may haue the grace to mend:  
But how haue they offended you so much?

*Leir.* If from the first I should relate the cause,  
Twould make a heart of Adamant to weepe;  
And thou, poore soule, kind-hearted as thou art,  
Dost weepe already, ere I do begin.

*Cor.* For Gods loue tell it, and when you haue done,  
Ile tell the reason why I weepe so soone.

*Leir.* Then know this first, I am a Brittayne borne,  
And had three daughters by one louing wife;

2240

## *The History of King Leir*

And though I say it, of beauty they were sped;  
Especially the youngest of the three,  
For her perfections hardly matcht could be:  
On these I doted with a ielous loue,  
And thought to try which of them lou'd me best,  
By asking them, which would do most for me?  
The first and second flattred me with words,  
And vowd they lou'd me better then their liues:  
2250 The youngest sayd, she loued me as a child  
Might do: her answere I esteem'd most vild,  
And presently in an outragious mood,  
I turned her from me to go sinke or swym:  
And all I had, euen to the very clothes,  
I gaue in dowry with the other two:  
And she that best deseru'd the greatest share,  
I gaue her nothing, but disgrace and care.  
Now mark the sequell: When I had done thus,  
I soiournd in my eldest daughters house,  
2260 Where for a time I was intreated well,  
And liu'd in state sufficing my content:  
But every day her kindnesse did grow cold,  
Which I with patience put vp well ynough,  
And seemed not to see the things I saw:  
But at the last she grew so far incenit  
With moody fury, and with causlesse hate,  
That in most vild and contumelious termes,  
She bade me pack, and harbour somewhere else.  
Then was I fayne for refuge to repayre  
2270 Vnto my other daughter for relief,  
Who gaue me pleasing and most courteous words;  
But in her actions shewed her selfe so sore,  
As neuer any daughter did before:  
She prayd me in a morning out betime,  
To go to a thicket two miles from the Court,  
Poynting that there she would come talke with me:  
There she had set a shaghayrd murdring wretch,  
To massacre my honest friend and me.  
Then iudge your selfe, although my tale be briefe,  
2280 If euer man had greater cause of griefe.

*King. Nor*

*and his three daughters.*

*King.* Nor neuer like impiety was done,  
Since the creation of the world begun.

*Leir.* And now I am constraind to seeke relief  
Of her, to whom I haue bin so vnkind ;  
Whose censure, if it do award me death,  
I must confess she payes me but my due :  
But if she shew a louing daughters part,  
It comes of God and her, not my desert.

*Cor.* No doubt she will, I dare be sworne she will.

*Leir.* How know you that, not knowing what she is ? 2290

*Cor.* My selfe a father haue a great way hence,  
Vsde me as ill as euer you did her ;  
Yet, that his reuerend age I once might see,  
Ide creepe along, to meet him on my knee.

*Leir.* O, no mens children are vnkind but mine.

*Cor.* Condemne not all, because of others crime :  
But looke, deare father, looke, behold and see  
Thy louing daughter speaketh vnto thee. *She kneeles.*

*Leir.* O, stand thou vp, it is my part to kneele,  
And aske forgiuenesse for my former faults. *be kneeles.* 2300

*Cor.* O, if you wish I should inioy my breath,  
Deare father rise, or I receiue my death. *be riseth.*

*Leir.* Then I will rise, to satisfy your mind,  
But kneele againe, til pardon be refignd. *be kneeles.*

*Cor.* I pardon you : the word befeemes not me :  
But I do say so, for to ease your knee.  
You gaue me life, you were the cause that I  
Am what I am, who else had neuer bin.

*Leir.* But you gaue life to me and to my friend,  
Whose dayes had else, had an vntimely end. 2310

*Cor.* You brought me vp, when as I was but young,  
And far vnable for to helpe my selfe.

*Leir.* I cast thee forth, when as thou wast but young,  
And far vnable for to helpe thy selfe.

*Cor.* God, world and nature say I do you wrong,  
That can indure to see you kneele so long.

*King.* Let me breake off this louing controuersy,  
Which doth reioyce my very soule to see.  
Good father, rise, she is your louing daughter, *He riseth.*

## *The History of King Lear*

2320 And honours you with as respective duty,  
As if you were the Monarch of the world.

*Cor.* But I will neuer rise from off my knee,*See knees.*  
Vntill I haue your blessing, and your pardon  
Of all my faults committed any way,  
From my first birth vnto this present day.

*Leir.* The blessing, which the God of *Abraham* gaue  
Vnto the trybe of *Iuda*, light on thee,  
And multiply thy dayes, that thou mayst see  
Thy childrens children prosper after thee.

2330 Thy faults, which are iult none that I do know,  
God pardon on high, and I forgiue below. *See riseth.*

Cor. Now is my heart at quiet, and doth leap  
Within my brest, for ioy of this good hap:  
And now (deare father) welcome to our Court,  
And welcome (kind *Perillus*) vnto me,  
Myrrour of vertue and true honesty.

*Leir.* O, he hath bin the kindest friend to me,  
That euer man had in aduersity.

Per. My young doth faile, to say what heart doth think,  
2340 I am so rauisht with exceeding ioy.

*King.* All you haue spoke: now let me speak my mind,  
And in few words much matter here conclude: *be knees.*  
If ere my heart do harbour any ioy,  
Or true content repose within my brest,  
Till I haue rooted out this viperous sect,  
And repossest my father of his Crowne,  
Let me be counted for the periur'dt man,  
That euer spake word since the world began. *rise.*

Mum. Let me pray to, that neuer pray'd before; Mumford  
2350 If ere I resalute the Brittish earth, knees.  
(As (ere't be long) I do presume I shall)  
And do returne from thence without my wench,  
Let me be gelded for my recompence. rise.

*King.* Come, let's to arms for to redresse this wrong:  
Till I am there, me thinks, the time seemes long. *Excuse.*

Sc. 207

*Enter Ragan sola.*

*Rag.* I feele a hell of conscience in my brest,  
Tormenting me with horrour for my fact,

And

*and his three daughters.*

And makes me in an agony of doubt,  
For feare the world should find my dealing out.  
The flauue whom I appoynted for the act,  
I ne're set eye vpon the peasant since:  
O, could I get him for to make him sure,  
My doubts would cease, and I should rest secure.  
But if the old men, with perswasue words,  
Haue sau'd their liues, and made him to relent ;  
Then are they fled vnto the Court of Fraunce,  
And like a Trumpet manifest my shame.  
A shame on these white-liuert flauues, say I,

2360

That with fayre words so soone are ouercome.  
O God, that I had bin but made a man ;  
Or that my strength were equall with my will !  
These foolish men are nothing but meere pity,  
And melt as butter doth against the Sun.

Why should they haue preeminence ouer vs,  
Since we are creatures of more braue resolute ?

I sweare, I am quite out of charity  
With all the heartleſſe men in Christendome.

A poxe vpon them, when they are affrayd  
To giue a stab, or flit a paltry Wind-pipe,  
Which are so easie matters to be done.

2370

Well, had I thought the flauue would serue me so,  
My selfe would haue bin executioner :  
Tis now vndone, and if that it be knowne,  
Ile make as good shifft as I can for one.  
He that repines at me, how ere it stands,

Twere best for him to keepe him from my hands. *Exit.*

*Sound Drums & Trumpets: Enter the Gallian King, Sc. xxvi  
Leir, Mumford and the army.*

*King.* Thus haue we brought our army to the sea,  
Whereas our ships are ready to receyue vs :  
The wind stands fayre, and we in foure houres sayle,  
May easilie arriue on Brittish shore,  
Where vnxpected we may them surprise,  
And gayne a glorious victory with ease.  
Wherefore, my louing Countreymen, resolute,  
Since truth and iustice fighteth on our sides,

2380

I That

## *The History of King Leir*

That we shall march with conquest where we go.  
My selfe will be as forward as the first,  
2400 And step by step march with the hardiest wight:  
And not the meanest souldier in our Campe  
Shall be in danger, but ile second him.  
To you, my Lord, we giue the whole commaund  
Of all the army, next vnto our selfe,  
Not doubting of you, but you will extend  
Your wonted valour in this needfull case,  
Encouraging the rest to do the like,  
By your approued magnanimity.

*Mum.* My Liege, tis needesse to spur a willing horse,  
2410 Thats apt enough to run himselfe to death:  
For here I sweare by that sweet Saints bright eye,  
Which are the starres, which guide me to good hap,  
Eyther to see my old Lord crown'd anew,  
Or in his cause to bid the world adieu.

*Leir.* Thanks, good Lord *Mumford*, tis more of your good will,  
Then any merit or desert in me.

*Mum.* And now to you, my worthy Countrymen,  
Ye valiant race of Genouestan Gawles,  
Surnamed Red-shanks, for your chyualry,  
2420 Because you fight vp to the shanks in bloud;  
Shew your selues now to be right Gawles indeed,  
And be so bitter on your enemies,  
That they may say, you are as bitter as Gall.  
Gall them, braue Shot, with your Artillery:  
Gall them, braue Halberts, with your sharp point Billes,  
Each in their poynted place, not one, but all,  
Fight for the credit of your selues and Gawle.

*King.* Then what should more perswasion need to thofe,  
That rather wish to deale, then heare of blowes?  
2430 Let's to our ships, and if that God permit,  
In foure houres sayle, I hope we shall be there.

*Mum.* And in fие houres more, I make no doubt,  
But we shall bring our wish'd desires about. *Exeunt.*

*S. xvii* *Enter a Captayne of the watch, and two watchmen.*

*Cap.* My honest friends, it is your turne to night,  
To watch in this place, neere about the Beacon,

And

*and his three daughters.*

And vigilantly haue regard,  
If any fleet of ships passe hitherward:  
Which if you do, your office is to fire

The Beacon presently, and raise the towne. *Exit.*

2440

1. *Wat.* I, I, I, feare nothing; we know our charge, I warrant:  
I haue bin a watchman about this Beacon this xxx. yere, and  
yet I ne're see it stir, but stood as quietly as might be.

2. *Wat.* Fayth neighbour, and you'l follow my vice, instead of  
watching the Beacon, wee'l go to goodman *Gennings*, & watch  
a pot of Ale and a rasher of Bacon: and if we do not drink our  
selues drunke, then so; I warrant, the Beacon will see vs when  
we come out agayne.

1. *W.* I, but how if some body excuse vs to the Captayne?

2. *W.* Tis no matter, ile proue by good reason that we watch 2450  
the Beacon: asse for example.

1. *W.* I hope you do not call me asse by craft, neighbour.

2. *W.* No, no, but for example: Say here stands the pot of ale,  
thats the Beacon. 1. *W.* I, I, tis a very good Beacon.

2. *W.* Well, say here stands your nose, thats the fire.

1. *W.* Indeed I must confess, tis somewhat red.

2. *W.* I see come marching in a dish, halfe a score pieces of salt  
Bacon. 1. *W.* I vnderstand your meaning, thats as much to say,  
half a score ships. 2. *W.* True, you conster right; presently, like  
a faithfull watchman, I fire the Beacon, and call vp the towne. 2460

1. *W.* I, thats as much as to say, you set your nose to the pot, and  
drink vp the drink. 2. *W.* You are in the right; come, let's go  
fire the Beacon.

*Exit.*

*Enter the King of Gallia with a stil march, Mumford & soldiers. Sc. xviii*

*King.* Now march our ensignes on the Brittish earth,

And we are neere approaching to the towne:

Then looke about you, valiant Countrymen,

And we shall finish this exployt with ease.

Th'inhabitants of this mistrustfull place,

Are dead asleep, as men that are secure:

Here shall we skirmish but with naked men,

Deuoyd of fence, new waked from a dreame,

That know not what our comming doth pretend,

Till they do feele our meaning on their skinnes:

Therefore assaile: God and our right for vs. *Exit.*

2470

# *The History of King Leir*

Sc. xxix *Alarum, with men and women halfe naked: Enter two Captaynes without dublets, with swards.*

1. Cap. Where are these villaines that were set to watch,  
And fire the Beacon, if occasion seru'd,  
2480 That thus haue suffred vs to be surprisde,  
And neuer giuen notice to the towne?  
We are betrayd, and quite deuoyd of hope,  
By any meanes to fortify our selues.

2. Cap. Tis ten to one the peasants are o'recome with drinke  
and sleep, and so neglect their charge.

1. Cap. A whirl-wind carry them quick to a whirl-poole,  
That there the flaues may drinke their bellies full.

2. Cap. This tis, to haue the Beacon so neere the Ale-houſe.  
*Enter the watchmen drunke, with each a pot.*

2490 1. Cap. Out on ye, villaynes, whither run you now?

1. Wat. To fire the towne, and call vp the Beacon.

2. Wat. No, no, fir, to fire the Beacon. *He drinkes.*

2. Cap. What, with a pot of ale, you drunken Rogues?

1. Cap. You'l fire the Beacon, when the towne is lost:  
Ile teach you how to tend your office better. *draw to stab them.*

*Enter Mumford, Captaynes run away.*

Mum. Yeeld, yeeld, yeeld. *He kicks downe their pots.*

1. Wat. Reele? no, we do not reele:

You may lacke a pot of Ale ere you dye.

2500 Mum. But in meane space, I answer, you want none.

Wel, theres no dealing with you, y'are tall men, & wel weapōd,  
I would there were no worse then you in the towne. *Exit.*

2. Wat. A speekslike an honest man, my cholers past already.  
Come, neighbour, let's go.

1. Wat. Nay, first let's see and we can stand. *Exeunt.*

*Alarum, excursions, Mumford after them, and some halfe naked.*  
Sc. xxx *Enter the Gallian King, Leir, Mumford, Cordella, Perillus, and souldiers, with the chiefe of the towne bound.*

King. Feare not, my friends, you shall receyue no hurt,  
2510 If you'l subscribe vnto your lawfull King,  
And quite reuoke your fealty from *Cambria*,  
And from aspiring *Cornwall* too, whose wiues  
Haue practisde treason 'gainst their fathers life.  
Wee come in iustice of your wronged King,

And

*and his three daughters.*

And do intend no harm at all to you,  
So you submit vnto your lawfull King.

*Leir.* Kind Countrymen, it grieues me, that perforce,  
I am constraind to vse extremities.

*Noble.* Long haue you here bin lookt for, good my Lord,  
And wish'd for by a generall consent: 2520  
And had we known your Highnesse had arriued,  
We had not made resistance to your Grace:  
And now, my gracious Lord, you need not doubt,  
But all the Country will yeeld presently,  
Which since your absence haue bin greatly tax'd,  
For to maintayne their ouerswelling pride.  
Weele presently send word to all our friends;  
When they haue notice, they will come apace.

*Leir.* Thanks, louing subiects; and thanks, worthy son,  
Thanks, my kind daughter, thanks to you, my Lord, 2530  
Who willingly aduentured haue your blood,  
(Without desert) to do me so much good.

*Mum.* O, say not so:  
I haue bin much beholding to your Grace:  
I must confesse, I haue bin in some skirmishes,  
But I was neuer in the like to this:  
For where I was wont to meet with armed men,  
I was now incountred with naked women.

*Cord.* We that are feeble, and want vse of Armes,  
Will pray to God, to sheeld you from all harmes. 2540

*Leir.* The while your hands do manage ceaselesse toyle,  
Our hearts shall pray, the foes may haue the foyle.

*Per.* Weele faint and pray, whilst you for vs do fight,  
That victory may prosecute the right.

*King.* Me thinks, your words do amplify (my friends)  
And adde fresh vigor to my willing limmes: *Drum.*  
But harke, I heare the aduerse Drum approch.  
God and our right, Saint Denis, and Saint George.

*Enter Cornwall, Cambria, Gonorill, Ragan, and the army.*

*Corn.* Presumptuous King of Gawles, how darest thou  
Presume to enter on our Britiſh shore? 2550  
And more then that, to take our townes perforce,  
And draw our subiects hearts from their true King?

## *The History of King Leir*

Be sute to buy it at as deare a price,  
As ere you bought presumption in your liues.

*King.* Ore-daring *Cornwall*, know, we came in right,  
And iust reuengement of the wronged King,  
Whose daughters there, fell vipers as they are,  
Haue sought to murder and deprive of life:  
2560 But God protected him from all their spight,  
And we are come in iustice of his right.

*Cam.* Nor he nor thou haue any interest here,  
But what you win and purchase with the sword.  
Thy flaunders to our noble vertuous *Queenes*,  
Weel in the battell thrust them down thy throte,  
Except for feare of our revenging hands,  
Thou flye to sea, as not secure on lands.

*Mum.* Welshman, ile soferrit you ere night for that word,  
That you shall haue no mind to crake so wel this twelueonth.

2570 *Gon.* They lye, that say, we sought our fathers death.

*Rag.* Tis merely forged for a colours sake,  
To set a gloffe on your inuasion.  
Me thinks, an old man ready for to dye,  
Should be ashamed to broache so foule a lye.

*Cord.* Fy, shamelesse sister, so deuoyd of grace,  
To call our father lyer to his face.

*Gon.* Peace (Puritan) dissembling hypocrite,  
Which art so good, that thou wilt prove stark naught:  
Anon, when as I haue you in my fingers,  
2580 Ile make you wish your selfe in Purgatory.

*Per.* Nay, peace thou monster, shame vnto thy sexe:  
Thou fiend in likenesse of a humane creature.

*Rag.* I neuer heard a fouler spoken man.

*Leir.* Out on thee, viper, scum, filthy parricide,  
More odious to my sight then is a Toade.

Knowest thou these letters? *She snatches them & teares them.*

*Rag.* Think you to outface me with your paltry scrowles?  
You come to drive my husband from his right,  
Vnder the colour of a forged letter.

2590 *Leir.* Who euer heard the like impiety?

*Per.* You are our debtour of more patience:  
We were more patient when we stayd for you,

Within

*and his three daughters.*

Within the thicket two long houres and more.

*Rag.* What houres? what thicket?

*Per.* There, where you sent your seruant with your letters,  
Seald with your hand, to send vs both to heauen,  
Where, as I thinke, you never meane to come.

*Rag.* Alas, you are growne a child agayne with age,  
Or else your fences dote for want of sleepe.

*Per.* Indeed you made vs rise betimes, you know, 2600  
Yet had a care we should sleepe where you bade vs stay,  
But never wake more till the latter day.

*Gon.* Peace, peace, old fellow, thou art sleepy still.

*Mum.* Fayth, and if you reason till to morrow,  
You get no other answere at their hands.

Tis pitty two such good faces  
Should haue so little grace betweene them.  
Well, let vs see if their husbands with their hands,  
Can do as much, as they do with their youngs.

*Cam.* I, with their swards they'l make your young vnfaire 2610  
What they haue sayd, or else they'l cut them out.

*King.* Too't, gallants, too't, let's not stand brawling thus.

*Exeunt both armes.*

*Sound alarum: excursions. Mumford must chase Cambria* Sc. xxxi  
*away: then cease. Enter Cornwall.*

*Corn.* The day is lost, our friends do all reuolt,  
And ioyne against vs with the aduerse part:  
There is no meanes of safety but by flight,  
And therefore ile to Cornwall with my Queene. *Exit.*

*Enter Cambria.*

2620

*Cam.* I thinke, there is a deuill in the Campe hath haunted  
me to day: he hath so tyred me, that in a maner I can fight no  
more.

*Enter Mumford.*

Zounds, here he comes, Ile take me to my horse. *Exit.*

*Mumford followes him to the dore, and returns.*

*Mum.* Farewell (Welshman) give thee but thy due,  
Thou hast a light and nimble payre of legs:  
Thou art more in debt to them then to thy hands:  
But if I meet thee once agayne to day,  
Ile cut them off, and set them to a better heart. *Exit.* 2630

*Alarums*

# *The History of King Leir*

Sc. xxxii *Alarums and excursions, then found victory. Enter Leir, Perillus, King, Cordella, and Mumford.*

*King.* Thanks be to God, your foes are ouercome,  
And you againe posseſſed of your right.

*Leir.* First to the heauens, next, thanks to you, my sonne,  
By whose good meanes I reposſeſſe the ſame:  
Which if it please you to accept your ſelfe,  
With all my heart I will refigne to you:  
For it is yours by right, and none of mine.

2640 First, haue you raiſd, at your owne charge, a power  
Of valiant Soulđiers; (this comes all from you)  
Next haue you ventured your owne perſons ſcathe.  
And laſtly, (worthy *Gallia* neuer staynd)  
My kingly title I by thee haue gaynd.

*King.* Thank heauens, not me, my zeale to you is ſuch,  
Commaund my vtmoſt, I will neuer grutch.

*Cor.* He that with all kind loue intreats his Queene,  
Will not be to her father vnkind ſeene.

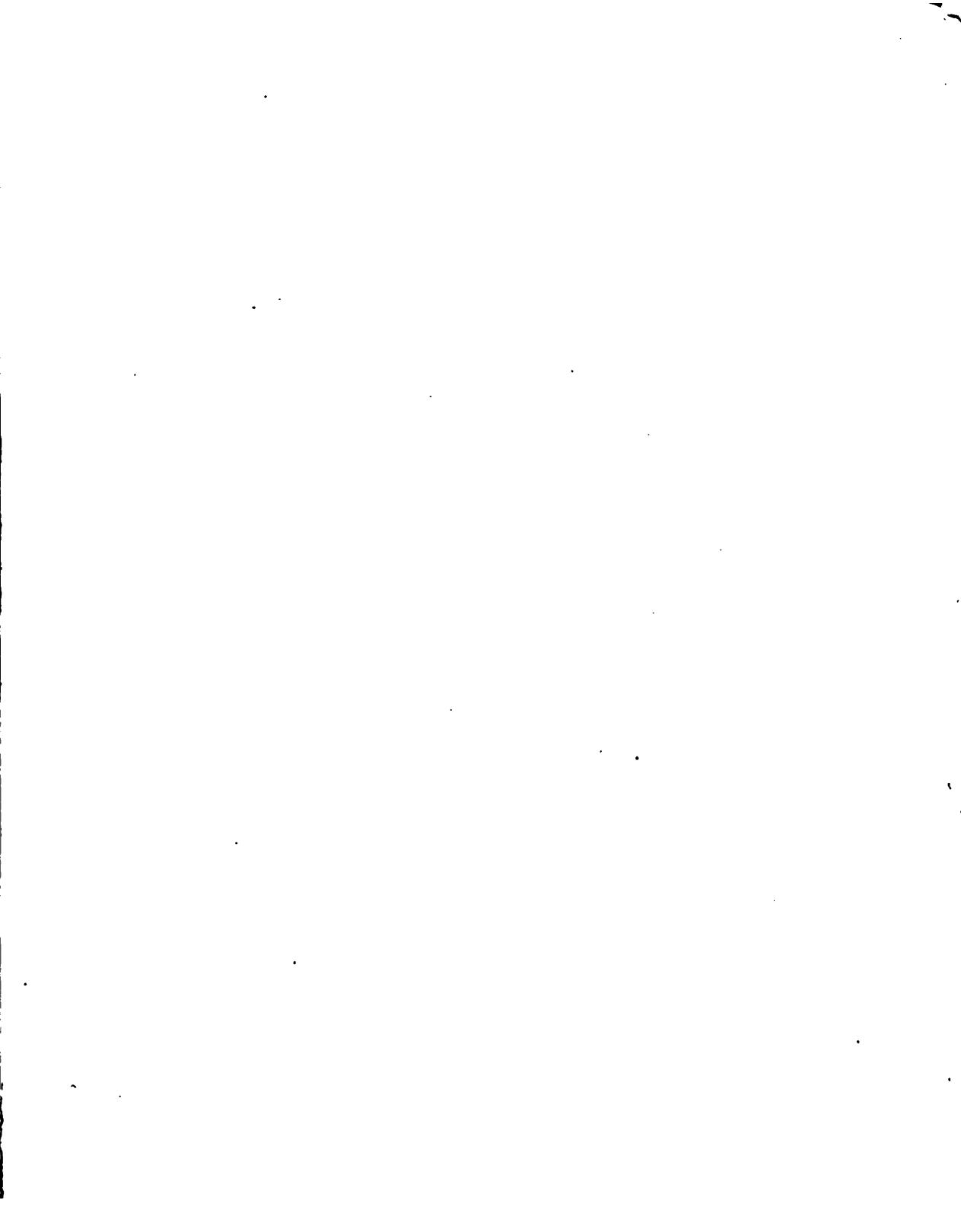
2650 *Leir.* Ah, my *Cordella*, now I call to mind,  
The modeſt anſweref, which I tooke vnkind:  
But now I ſee, I am no whit beguiled,  
Thou louedſt me dearely, and as ought a child.  
And thou (*Perillus*) partner once in woe,  
Thee to requite, the beſt I can, Ile doe:  
Yet all I can, I, were it ne're ſo much,  
Were not ſufficient, thy true loue is ſuch.

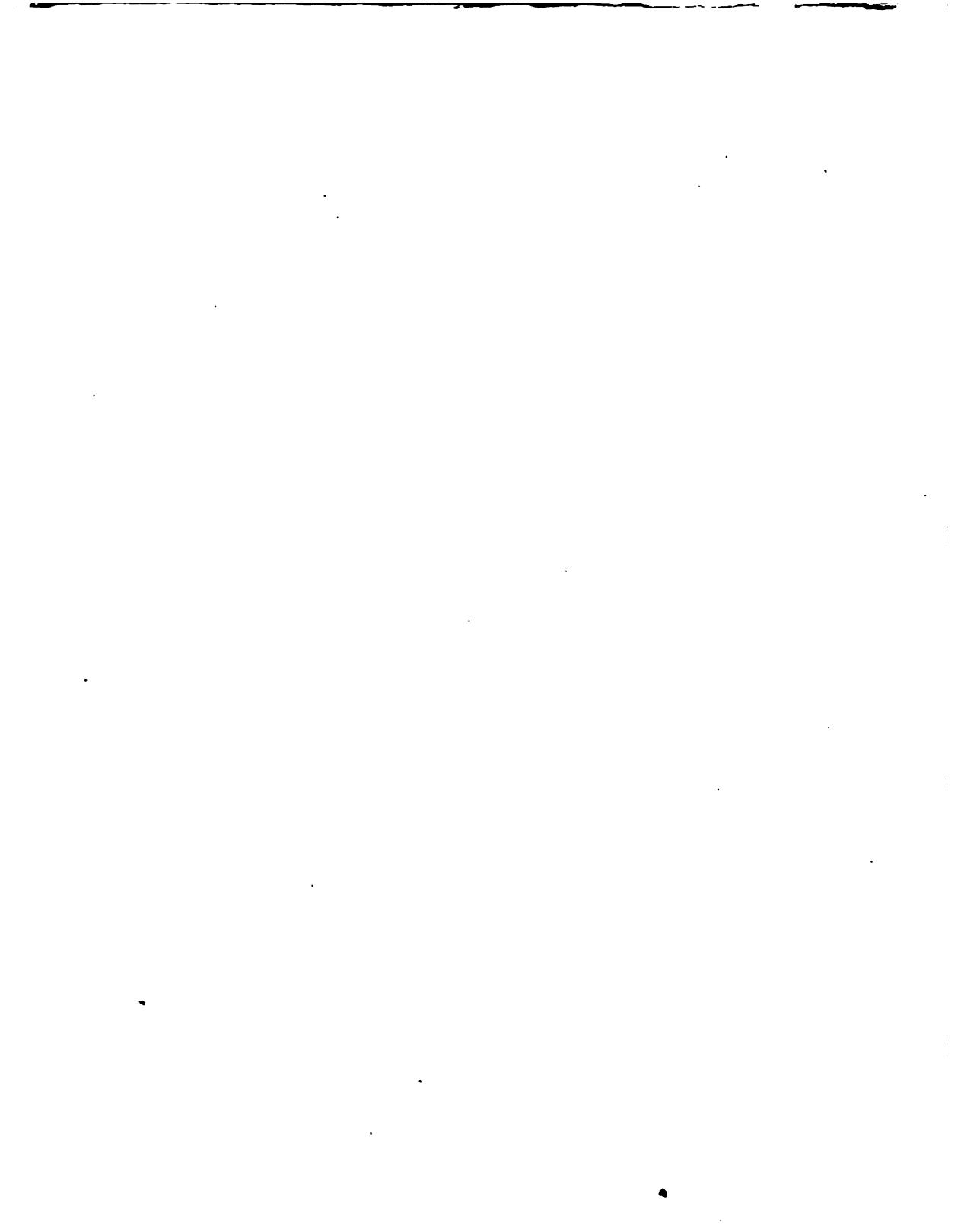
Thanks (worthy *Mumford*) to thee laſt of all,  
Not greeted laſt, 'caufe thy deſert was ſmall;  
No, thou haſt Lion-like layd on to day,  
2660 Chafing the Cornwall King and Cambria;  
Who with my daughters, daughters did I ſay?  
To ſaue their liues, the fugitiues did play.  
Come, ſonne and daughter, who did me aduaunce,  
Repoſe with me awhile, and then for Fraunce.

*Sound Drummes and Trumpets.* *Exeunt.*

FINIS.









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